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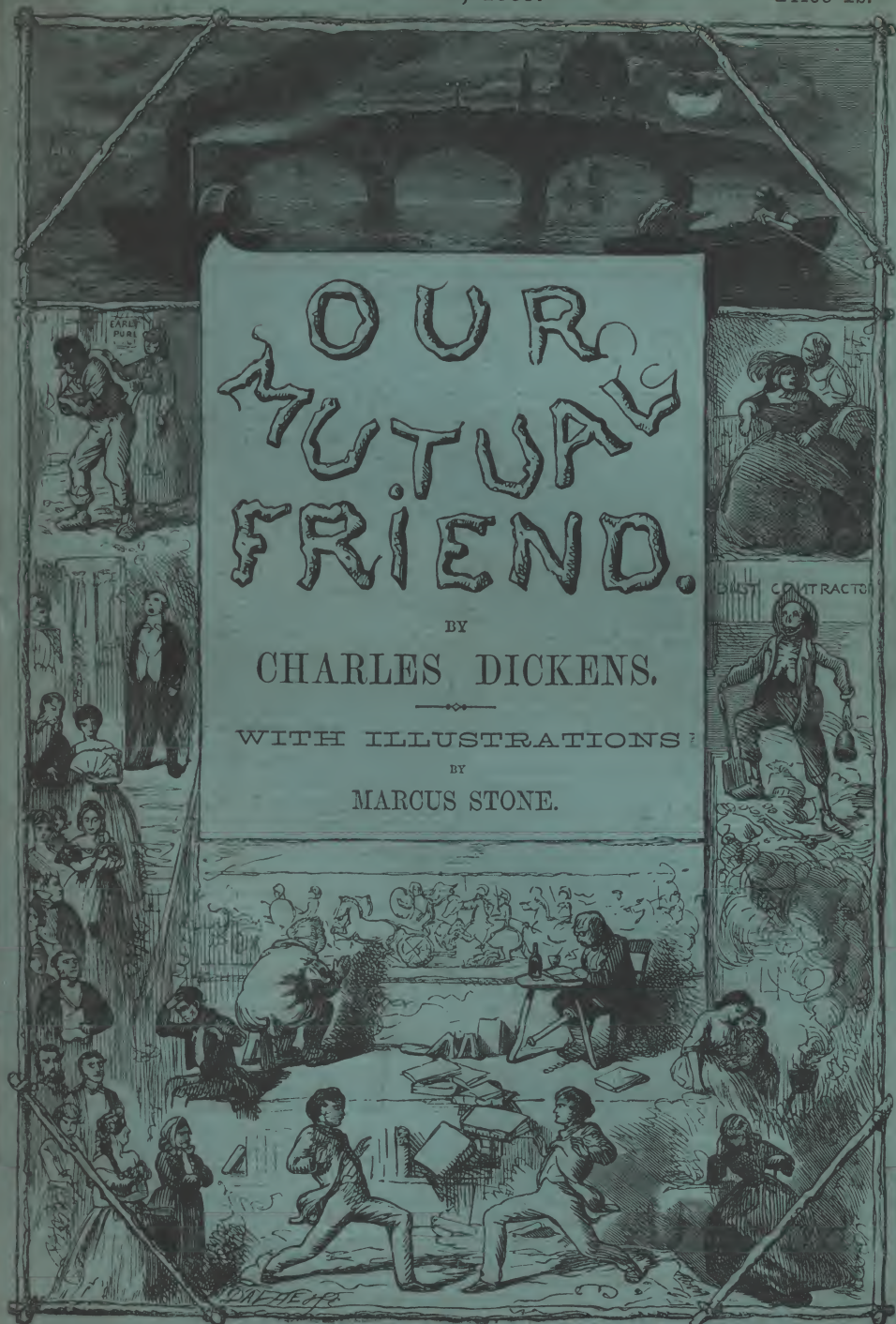
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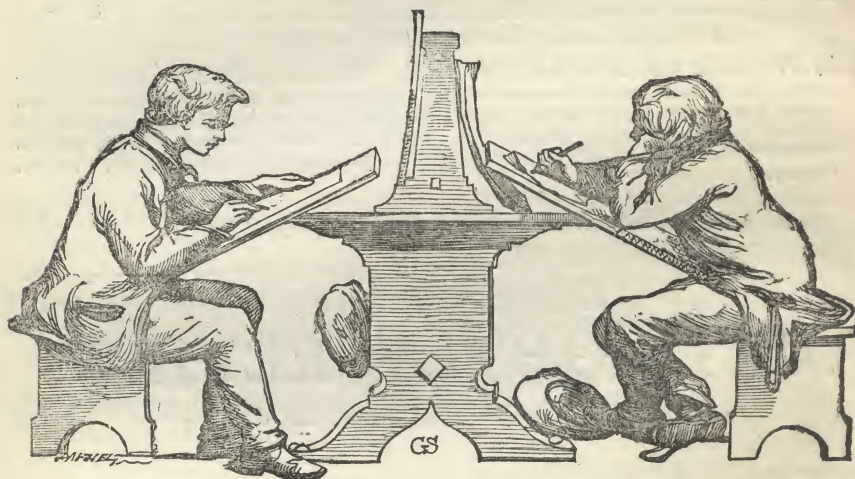
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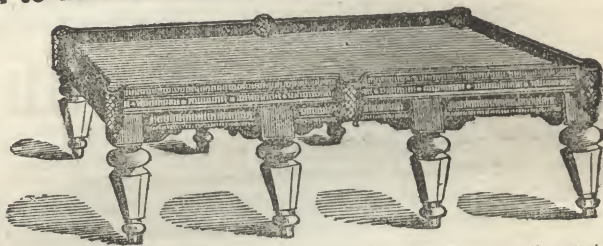
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J. S. FRY & SONS are the ONLY English House in the world to whom a PRIZE MEDAL was awarded at the International Exhibition of 1862. The superior quality of their articles has been attested by universal public approbation DURING A CENTURY.

FOR CHILDREN'S DIET.

BROWN & POLSON'S



PATENT CORN FLOUR.

GUARANTEED
PERFECTLY PURE

CORRECTED RECIPES FOR
INFANTS' FOOD.

To two teaspoonsful of BROWN AND POLSON'S CORN FLOUR, add two table-spoonsful of cold water, and of boiling milk and water (equal quantities); boil for five minutes, and sweeten very slightly. It should be about the thickness of cream.

RECONNOITERER'S CLASS ^{10/10d!!!} SENT FREE

ACTLY shows small Windows 10 miles off, Landscape at 30 miles, Jupiter's &c. MARQUESS OF CARMARTHEN—'The Reconnoiterer is very good.' LORD GARVAGH—'Remarkably good.' LORD SCARSDALE 'approves of it.' LORD GIFFORD—'Most useful.' SIR DIGBY CAYLEY—'Gives me complete vision, and is wonderfully good.' F. H. FAWKES of Farnley, Esq.—'I never met a glass combining so much power with so much clearness.' MAJOR SPARKEY of Wrenbury—'Quite as powerful as that for which I gave 5l. 5s.' SENDLEY, Royal Small Arms Factory, Enfield—'It is effective on the 1000 yards range.' FIELD—'We have fully equal to others which had cost more than four times its price.' NOTES AND QUERIES—'What tourist will not without such an indispensable companion?' The 'HYTHE' GLASS shows bullet-marks at 1200 yards, and men's legs, 31s. 6d.

Above, bearing the Registered Trade-Marks 'RECONNOITERER' and 'HYTHE,' only to be had direct from, and by application to, SALOM & CO., 98 Princes Street, Edinburgh.

No AGENTS of any kind.

Cash's Cambric Frilling



Requires neither *hemming* nor *whipping*, and is of a fine and peculiarly durable material, perfectly free from all *dress*. It is of various widths. For trimming all kinds of LADIES' and CHILDREN'S WASHING APPAREL.

Sold by all Drapers, in Envelopes containing 12 yards, and bearing the names of J. & J. CASH, Patentees.

This Frilling is not attached to any band, and can be sewn on with great neatness.

SLACK'S ELECTRO-PLATE

IS a coating of Pure Silver over Nickel. A combination of two Metals possessing such valuable properties renders it in appearance and wear equal to Sterling Silver.

MANUFACTURED SOLELY BY R. AND J. SLACK.

Cruet Frames, from 18s.; Corner Dishes, 8l. 8s. set, forming Eight Dishes; Tea and Coffee Sets from 4l. 10s.

Dishes; Tea and Coffee Sets from 47. 10s.												King's			
Electro Plated				Strong Plated				Thread				or Thread,			
Fiddle Pattern.				Fiddle Pattern.				Pattern.				with Shell.			
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.			
Table Forks, per dozen	1	10	0	...	1	18	0	...	2	8	0	...	3	0	0
Dessert Forks	1	0	0	...	1	10	0	...	1	15	0	...	2	2	0
Table Spoons	1	10	0	...	1	18	0	...	2	8	0	...	3	0	0
Dessert Spoons	1	0	0	...	1	10	0	...	1	15	0	...	2	2	0
Tea Spoons	0	12	0	...	0	18	0	...	1	3	6	...	1	10	0

EVERY ARTICLE FOR THE TABLE AS IN SILVER.

OLD GOODS REPLATED EQUAL TO NEW.

SLACK'S TABLE CUTLERY

Has been celebrated 50 years for quality and cheapness

Catalogue of Drawings and Prices may be had gratis, or sent Post-free. Orders above 2l. sent carriage free, per rail, and packed without charge.

RICHARD AND JOHN SLACK,

IRONMONGERS TO HER MAJESTY,

336 STRAND, opposite SOMERSET HOUSE.

THE PERFECT HAIR-DYE.**UNWIN AND ALBERT'S COLUMBIAN.**

—Its extraordinary power is so effective and instantaneous that grey hair is coloured permanently a natural brown or black the moment it is touched by the dye, leaving it perfectly clean and soft as before the application. In cases at 5s. 6d., 10s. 6d., and 21s. Sample Case, 2s. 6d.; by post 40 stamps. 24 PICCADILLY, where Specimens may be seen.

**Beware of Imitations.**

AURICOMUS FLUID, for producing the rich golden flaxen colour so greatly admired for its beautiful and becoming shade, on ladies' and children's hair. Prepared only by UNWIN and ALBERT, Court Hairdressers, 24 Piccadilly. In bottles, 10s. 6d. and 21s.

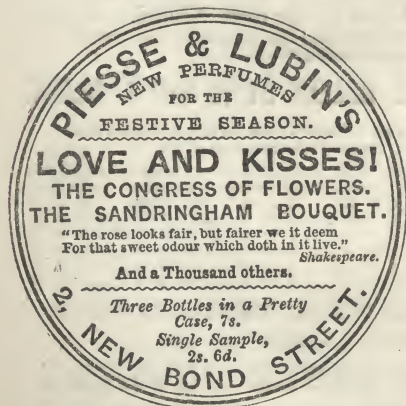
SHEPPARD'S**NEW MODEL DAIRY BUTTER,**

Always good, in One Pound Baskets, 1s. 4d., basket included. Cheese, Hams, Bacon, Tongues, Chaps, &c., of the choicest descriptions. Crosse and Blackwell's Pickles, Sauces, and Breakfast and Luncheon Delicacies.

Provision Warehouses,
88 Borough, S.E., & Terminus Stores,
London Bridge, S.E.

Bond's Permanent Marking Ink.**THE ORIGINAL INVENTION,**

Established 1821, is by far the BEST for Marking NAMES and INITIALS upon household linen, wearing apparel, &c. Price 1s. per bottle. No sixpenny size ever made. Sold by E. R. BOND, 10, Bishopsgate St. Within, E.C., and by all respectable chemists and stationers in the United Kingdom.—Notice. Removed from 28, Long Lane, E.C. (where it has been established nearly half a century), to 10, Bishopsgate Street Within, E.C.



Cool and Refreshing Toilette Requisite.

OLDRIDGE'S BALM OF COLUM-

BIA, established upwards of forty years, is the best and only certain remedy ever discovered for Preserving, Strengthening, Beautifying, or Restoring the Hair, Whiskers, or Moustaches, and preventing them turning grey. Sold in bottles, 3s. 6d., 6s., and 11s., by C. and A. Oldridge, 22, Wellington Street, Strand, London, W.C., and all Chemists and Perfumers. For Children's and Ladies' Hair it is most efficacious and unrivalled.



Used in the Palaces of

THE QUEEN

and the

PRINCE OF WALES

More cleanly, polishes more quickly, & cheaper.

Because it is less wasteful, and because a little goes further than any other kind. Sold by Grocers, Druggists, Ironmongers, &c. RECKITT and SONS, Suffolk Lane, Upper Thames Street, E.C., and Hull.

White and Sound Teeth:**JEWSBURY and BROWN'S ORIENTAL TOOTH PASTE.**

Established by 40 years experience as the best preservative for the teeth and gums. The original and only Genuine, 1s. 6d. and 2s. 6d. per pot.

113, MARKET STREET, MANCHESTER; and by Agents throughout the Kingdom and Colonies.

Kaye's Worsdell's Pills.

THE experience of nearly half a century proves that this invaluable Medicine is potent for the removal of DISEASE, and the restoration of HEALTH. No FAMILY should be without it, as a timely use of this great Remedy has saved THOUSANDS of valuable lives. There is no form of disease which may not be cured if Kaye's Worsdell's Pills are taken in time. Sold by all Chemists, &c., at 1s. 1d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 6d. per box.

TRELOAR'S**COCOA-NUT MATTING**

AND

KAMPTULICON,

Wholesale and Retail at the Manufacturer's
Warehouses,

10 LUDGATE HILL, LONDON

**GLASS SHADES**

For the Protection of Articles injured by exposure

FERN CASES AND AQUARIUMS,

GLASS AND OTHER MATERIALS FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC PURPOSES,

AND EVERY KIND OF PLAIN AND ORNAMENTAL

WINDOW-GLASS,

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL, AT

CLAUDET & HOUGHTON'S,

89, HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON

Lists of Prices sent Free on Application.

NAHAN'S LL WHISKY V. COGNAC BRANDY.

IS celebrated OLD IRISH WHISKY rivals the finest French Brandy. It is pure, mild, mellow, delicious, and very wholesome. Sold in bottles, at the retail houses in London; by the agents in the principal towns in England; wholesale, at 8, Great Windmill Street, Haymarket, W. Observe the red seal, pink and cork branded "Kinahan's LL Whisky."

OSLER'S GLASS CHANDELIERS,

WALL LIGHTS AND LUSTRES, FOR GAS AND CANDLES.

TABLE GLASS, ETC.

Dinner Services for 12 Persons, from 7l. 15s. Glass Dessert Services for 12 Persons, from 2l.

ALL ARTICLES MARKED IN PLAIN FIGURES.

Ornamental Glass, English and Foreign, suitable for Presents.

Mess, Export, and Furnishing Orders promptly executed.

LONDON—SHOW ROOMS, 45 OXFORD STREET.

BIRMINGHAM—MANUFACTORY & SHOW ROOMS, BROAD STREET,
ESTABLISHED 1807.

Chandeliers in Bronze and Ormolu for Dining-room and Library.

Candelabra, Moderator Lamps, in Bronze, Ormolu, China, and Glass.
Vases in Parian, Vases, and other Ornaments, in a Show-Room erected expressly for these Articles.

OSLER, 45 OXFORD STREET, W.

**IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT.****JOSEPH GILLOTT,**

METALLIC PEN MAKER TO THE QUEEN,

Desires to inform the Commercial World, Scholastic Institutions, and the public generally, that, by a novel application of his unrivalled Machinery for making Steel Pens, he has produced a NEW SERIES of his useful productions, which, for EXCELLENCE OF TEMPER, QUALITY OF MATERIAL, and, above all, CHEAPNESS IN PRICE, must insure universal approbation, and defy competition.

Each Pen bears the impress of his name as a guarantee of quality. They are put up in boxes containing six each, with label outside, and the fac-simile of his signature.

At the request of numerous persons engaged in tuition, J. G. has introduced his WARRANTED SCHOOL PENS, which are especially adapted to their use, being of different degrees of flexibility, and of fine, medium, and broad points, suitable for the various kinds of Writing taught in Schools.

Retail by all Stationers and Booksellers. Merchants and Wholesale Dealers can be supplied at the Birmingham-street, Birmingham; at 91 John-street, New York; and at 37 Gracechurch-street, London.

WILLIAM S. BURTON, GENERAL FURNISHING IRONMONGER

By Appointment, to H.R.H. the PRINCE of WALES.

THE PERFECT SUBSTITUTE FOR SILVER.

THE REAL NICKEL SILVER,

Introduced more than thirty years ago by

WILLIAM S. BURTON,

When PLATED by the patent process of Messrs. Elkington and Co., is beyond all comparison the very best article next to sterling silver that can be employed as such, either usefully or ornamentally, as by no possible test can it be distinguished from real silver.

A small useful set, guaranteed of first quality for finish and durability, as follows:—

	Fiddle or Old Silver Pattern.	Bead Pattern.	Thread Pattern.	King's or Thread and Shell Pattern.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
12 Table Forks	1 13 0	2 0 0	2 4 0	2 10 0
12 Table Spoons ...	1 13 0	2 0 0	2 4 0	2 10 0
12 Dessert Forks...	1 4 0	1 10 0	1 12 0	1 15 0
12 Dessert Spoons...	1 4 0	1 10 0	1 12 0	1 15 0
12 Tea Spoons....	16 0	1 0 0	1 2 0	1 5 0
6 Egg Spoons, } gilt bowls... }	10 0	12 0	12 0	13 6
2 Sauce Ladles... }	6 0	8 0	8 0	9 0
1 Gravy Spoon ... }	6 6	9 0	10 0	11 0
2 Salt Spoons, } gilt bowls... }	3 4	4 0	4 0	4 6
1 Mustard Spoon, } gilt bowl... }	1 8	2 0	2 0	2 3
1 Pair Sugar Tongs }	2 6	3 6	3 6	4 0
4 Pair Fish Carvers }	1 4 0	1 10 0	1 10 0	1 10 0
1 Butter Knife.... }	2 6	4 0	5 6	6 0
1 Soup Ladle }	10 0	12 0	16 0	17 0
1 Sugar Sifter }	3 3	4 6	4 6	5 0
Total.....	9 19 9	12 9 0	13 9 6	14 17 3

Any article to be had singly at the same prices. An oak chest to contain the above, and a relative number of knives, &c., £2 15s. Tea and Coffee Sets, Dish Covers, and Corner Dishes, Cruet and Liqueur Frames, &c., at proportionate prices. All kinds of re-plating done by the patent process.

CUTLERY WARRANTED.

The most varied Assortment of TABLE CUTLERY in the World, all warranted, 'as on sale at

WILLIAM S. BURTON'S,

At prices that are remunerative only because of largeness of the sales.

	Table Knives per doz.	Dessert Knives per doz.	Carve per doz.
IVORY HANDLES.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
3½-inch ivory handles	12 0	9 6	4
3½-inch fine ivory handles ..	15 0	11 6	4
4-inch ivory balance handles	18 0	14 0	5
4-inch fine ivory handles ...	24 0	17 0	7
4-inch finest African ivory handles	32 0	26 0	11
Ditto, with silver ferules ...	40 0	33 0	12
Ditto, carved handles, silver ferules	50 0	43 0	17
Nickel electro-silver han- dles, any pattern.....	25 0	19 0	17
Silver handles of any pattern	84 0	54 0	21
BONE AND HORN HANDLES.	!	!	!
Knives and Forks per dozen.			
White bone handles.....	11 0	8 6	2
Ditto, balance handles	21 0	17 0	4
Black horn, rim'd shoulders.	17 0	14 0	4
Do., very strong rivetted hdls.	12 0	9 0	3

The Largest Stock in existence of PLATED DESSERT KNIVES and FORKS, in Cases and otherwise, and of new Plated Fish Carvers.

BEDSTEADS, BEDDING, and FURNITURE.

—WILLIAM S. BURTON'S Stock on Sale of IRON and BRASS BEDSTEADS and CHILDREN'S COTS, stands unrivalled either for extent or modernness of prices. He also supplies Bedding, manufactured on the Premises, and Bed Hangings of guaranteed quality.

Patent Iron Bedsteads, fitted with dovetail joints, patent sacking, from 12s. each. Ornamental Iron and Brass Bedsteads in Great variety, from 17. 4s. to 25l.

Complete suites of Bed-room Furniture in mahogany, fancy woods, polished and japanned deal, always on stock. These are made by WILLIAM S. BURTON, at his Manufactory, 84 Newman Street, and every article is guaranteed. China Toilet Ware in great variety, from 4s. set of five pieces.

WILLIAM S. BURTON, GENERAL FURNISHING IRONMONGER

By Appointment to H.R.H. THE PRINCE of WALES,

Sends a CATALOGUE gratis and post paid. It contains upwards of 600 Illustrations of his illimitable Stock of Sterling Silver and Electro Plate, Nickel Silver, and Britannia Metal Goods, Dish Covers, Hot-water Dishes, Stoves, Fenders, Marble Chimney-pieces, Kitchen Ranges, Lamps, Gaseliers, Tea Trays, Urns and Kettles, Clocks, Cutlery, Baths, Toilet Ware, Turnery, Iron and Brass Bedsteads, Bedding, Bedroom Cabinet Furniture, &c., with Prices, and PLANS of the TWENTY LARGE SHOW-ROOMS at

39 OXFORD STREET, W.; 1, 1a, 2, 3, & 4, NEWMAN STREET
4, 5, & 6, PERRY'S PLACE; & 1 NEWMAN YARD, LONDON.

ESTABLISHED 1820.

LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLAWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET AND CHANCERY CROSS.

Empowered by Act of Parliament, 3 Edw. IV.

THE ECONOMIC LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY, ESTABLISHED 1823.

DIRECTORS.

HENRY BARNETT, Esq., <i>Chairman.</i>	
THE RT. HON. E. PLEYDELL BOUVIERE, M.P., <i>Deputy Chairman.</i>	
ALFRED KINGSFORD BARBER, Esq.	VICE-ADMIRAL ROBERT GORDON.
MICHAEL BIDDULPH, Esq.	CHARLES MORRIS, Esq.
EDWARD CHARRINGTON, Esq.	C. H. W. A COURT REPINGTON, Esq.
PASCOE CHARLES GLYN, Esq.	GEORGE KETTLBY RICKARDS, Esq.
SIR ALEXANDER DUFF GORDON, BART.	AUGUSTUS K. STEPHENSON, Esq.

AUDITORS.

JOHN HOWELL, Esq.	JOHN GILLIAM STILWELL, Esq.
HENRY ROBERTS, Esq.	RICHARD TAYLOR, Esq.
Physician.—WILLIAM EMMANUEL PAGE, M.D. Oxon., No. 11, Queen Street, May Fair.	
Surgeon.—BENJAMIN TRAVERS, Esq., F.R.C.S., No. 49, Dover Street, Piccadilly.	
Solicitor.—HENRY YOUNG, Esq., No. 12, Essex Street, Strand.	
Secretary.—ALEXANDER MACDONALD, Esq.	
Actuary.—OLINTHUS GREGORY DOWNES, Esq., F.R.A.S.	

The following are among the advantages of this Society:—

1st.—The security of an ample Assurance Fund.
2ndly.—For young and middle-aged lives the **LOWEST RATES OF PREMIUMS** that entitle the Assured to participate in the profits.

3rdly.—THE WHOLE OF THE PROFITS are divided every *fifth* year among those who have made five or more annual payments in respect of assurances effected for the *whole term of life at an equal rate of premium* (Table No. I.). The Bonus additions to Policies in 1834, 1839, and 1844, arising from three-fourths of the profits, were respectively £33,000, £77,000, and £109,000. Since 1844, when the shareholders were paid off, and the Society became purely mutual, the Bonus additions made to Policies entitled at the several dates to participate have been as follows:—

1849	£274,000
1854	£397,000
1859	£475,000
1864	£506,000

Showing a total of £1,871,000 of Reversionary Bonus declared since the commencement of the Society.

4thly.—All Policies entitled to the *absolute Bonus* will receive a *contingent prospective Bonus* of £1 per cent. per annum, on becoming claims before 1869.

5thly.—Bonuses may be taken in ready money, or may be applied at the option of the Assured to increase the sum assured, or in reduction of future premiums, either for the remainder of life, or for the next five years only.

6thly.—Policies granted without any charge to the Assured, the stamp duty being paid by the Society.

7thly.—An option given to Assurers, on the increasing scale of rates, to commute the future increasing premium by an equivalent equal annual one for the remainder of life, and thereafter to participate in the profits. The same advantages are applicable to Assurers on the decreasing scale of rates.

8thly.—No charge for service in any Volunteer Corps.

9thly.—Policies on the lives of parties dying by suicide, duelling, or by the hands of justice, are not void as respects the interests of persons to whom they may have been legally assigned. All other cases are open to the consideration of the Board of Directors.

10thly.—Parties assuring the lives of others may have Policies permitting the Life-Assured to go beyond the limits of Europe, on paying such an additional premium during the continuance of the Assurance as may be required by the Board of Directors.

11thly.—Whole-life Policies on the equal scale of premium purchasable after three annual premiums have been paid thereon. Lapsed Policies revived on terms favorable to the Assured.

The usual Commission will be allowed to Solicitors and others recommending Assurances to the Office.

Assurances granted to the extent of £10,000 on a Single Life.

Further particulars may be obtained on application to

ALEXANDER MACDONALD,

Secretary.

ABSTRACT OF THE QUINQUENNIAL REPORT OF 1864.

Since the last Division, 2,641 Policies, assuring £2,050,788, have been issued, giving an annual average of 528 Policies of £777 each—a large and steady increase of the business.

The sum of £72,702 has been received during the five years in new Premiums, being at the rate of £14,540 a year.

The total income from Premiums, which in 1859 was £182,429, now amounts to £214,104, indicating an average annual increase of £4,385, after allowing for loss of income from discontinued Policies; while the gross income from all sources has increased at the rate of £10,230 per annum.

Claims have arisen during the five years on 794 Policies assuring £624,327, and carrying Bonuses to the amount of £116,899.

In addition to the Bonuses on Policies upon which claims have arisen, the sum of £87,149 has been paid as bonus in other ways, such as in reduction of bonus liability by cash payment, reduction of premium, purchase, &c., making a total of £204,048.

In the valuation of the Assets, an ample margin has been allowed for possible fluctuation of the Funds; and in the valuation of the Liabilities, the *risk* Premiums only have been taken into account, and no profit is declared by anticipation.

The Assets, consisting of Funded Property, Mortgages, Life Interests, and Reversions, Premiums due on 31st December (since paid), Interest accrued on Investments, Balance at Bankers and in hand, amount to £2,315,129. 19s. 2d.

The Liabilities, consisting of the values of Policies and the Bonuses already declared, claims accrued in 1863 but due in 1864, commission, taxes, and sundry small accounts, amount to £1,964,739. 1s. 7d. There is, therefore, after making provision for every known liability, a surplus of £350,390. 17s. 7d.

The Directors recommend that £329,890 of this surplus be distributed as absolute Bonus; and that the remaining sum of £20,500. 17s. 7d. be retained for the payment of annual, contingent, and conditional Bonuses.

The sum of £329,890 will produce reversionary Bonuses amounting to £506,300, yielding a percentage ranging from 5 to 34, or $9\frac{1}{2}$ on the average of the sums assured; and a percentage ranging from 26 to 160, or $59\frac{1}{2}$ on the average, on the premiums received in respect of which the Bonus is allotted.

The Society now assures by 9,022 Policies the sum of £7,233,564, and has an Assurance Fund amounting to £2,272,385. 11s., and an Annual Income of £307,475. The large number of assurances in force, affords a protection to the Society against those deviations from the average which attend a paucity of numbers, while the respective amounts of the capital and the income attest the firm and satisfactory condition of the Society.

The experience of the Society during this period (the fourth which has elapsed since paying off the Shareholders), has fully realised the expectations of the Directors, and they feel assured that the Members will share their satisfaction.

By order of the Board of Directors,

OLINTHUS GREGORY DOWNES,

Actuary.

WHOLE LIFE.

WITH PARTICIPATION IN PROFITS.

TABLE No. I.A.			
EQUAL RATES OF PREMIUM.			
Annual Premiums required for an Assurance of £100 for the whole Term of Life.			
Age.	Annual Premium.	Age.	Annual Premium.
15	£ s. d. 1 10 8	33	£ s. d. 2 8 0
16	1 11 5	34	2 9 5
17	1 12 3	35	2 10 11
18	1 13 0	36	2 12 6
19	1 13 10	37	2 14 2
20	1 14 7	38	2 15 11
21	1 15 5	39	2 17 9
22	1 16 3	40	2 19 9
23	1 17 2	41	3 1 10
24	1 18 1	42	3 4 1
25	1 19 0	43	3 6 6
26	2 0 0	44	3 9 0
27	2 1 0	45	3 11 9
28	2 2 0	46	3 14 7
29	2 3 1	47	3 17 8
30	2 4 3	48	4 0 11
31	2 5 5	49	4 4 4
32	2 6 8	50	4 7 6

TABLE No. I.B.			
Annual Premium payable during Ten Years only for an Assurance of £100 for the whole Term of Life.			
Age.	Annual Premium.	Age.	Annual Premium.
15	£ s. d. 3 14 11	33	£ s. d. 5 5 0
16	3 16 5	34	5 7 1
17	3 17 11	35	5 9 5
18	3 19 6	36	5 11 9
19	4 1 0	37	5 14 2
20	4 2 6	38	5 16 8
21	4 4 0	39	5 19 3
22	4 5 6	40	6 1 11
23	4 7 1	41	6 4 8
24	4 8 9	42	6 7 6
25	4 10 5	43	6 10 6
26	4 12 1	44	6 13 10
27	4 13 9	45	6 17 4
28	4 15 6	46	7 0 11
29	4 17 4	47	7 4 7
30	4 19 2	48	7 8 4
31	5 1 1	49	7 12 4
32	5 3 0	50	7 16 5

The advantages of Life Assurance may be thus briefly enumerated.

To provident persons Life Assurance presents the means of securing, by a small annual saving, a provision for their families, in the event of premature death.

It affords the opportunity of making a settlement prior to marriage.

It enables persons to raise money on life interests.

It secures sums of money contingent on parties coming of age.

It affords the opportunity of restoring to a family any amount of capital which the parent may have sunk on an estate, to hold it as tenant for life, or for two or three lives; an occurrence very common in many parts of England, particularly with respect to property held under the Church.

It affords facilities to debtors to satisfy their creditors; whilst to creditors it offers effectual, and, in many cases, the only means of security.

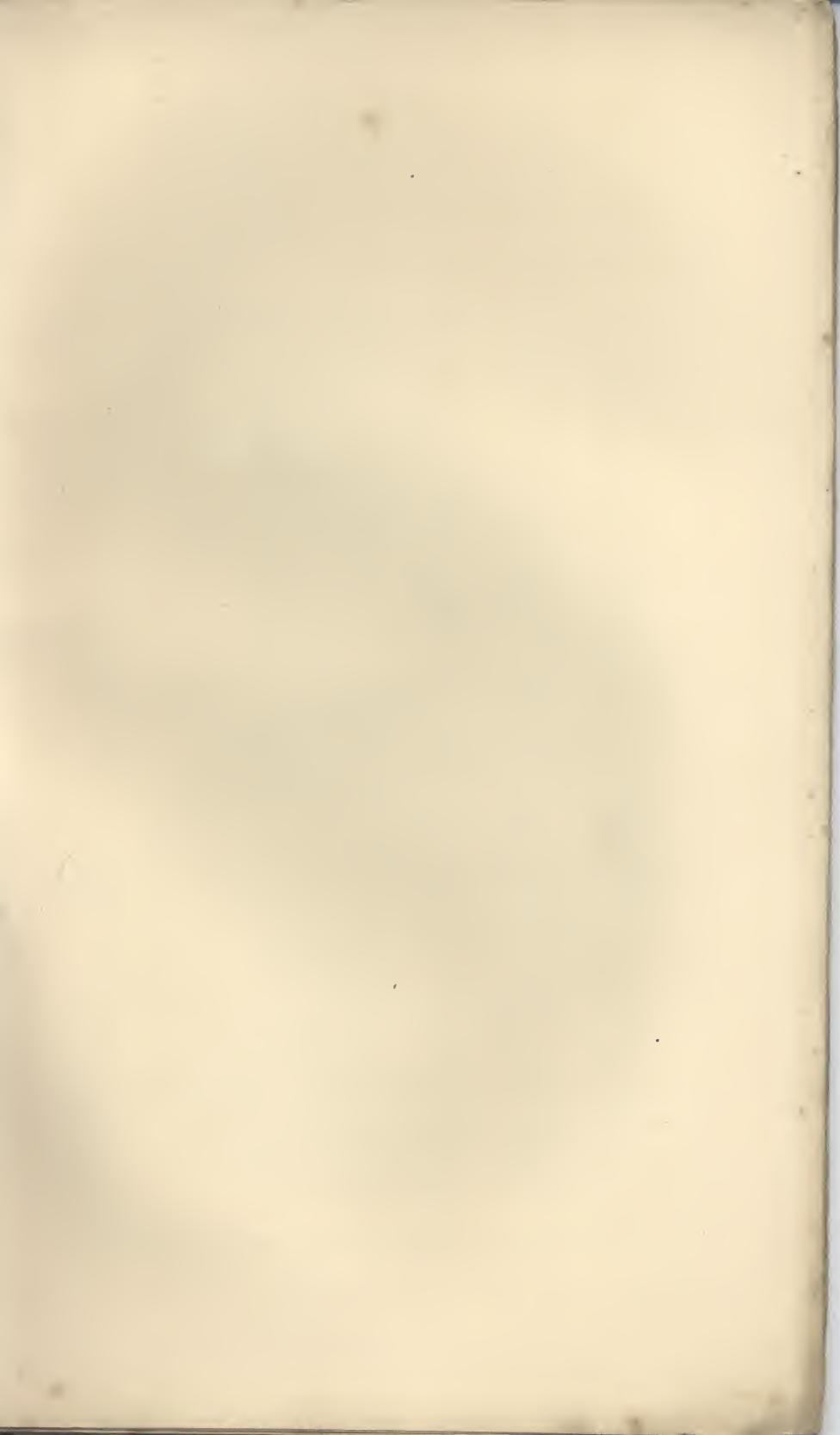
THE ECONOMIC LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY is constituted so as to afford these advantages to the public in their fullest extent, giving the advantages of the *mutual principle*, while supported by a large accumulated capital.

ECONOMIC LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY.

Particulars required on a PROPOSAL for an ASSURANCE.

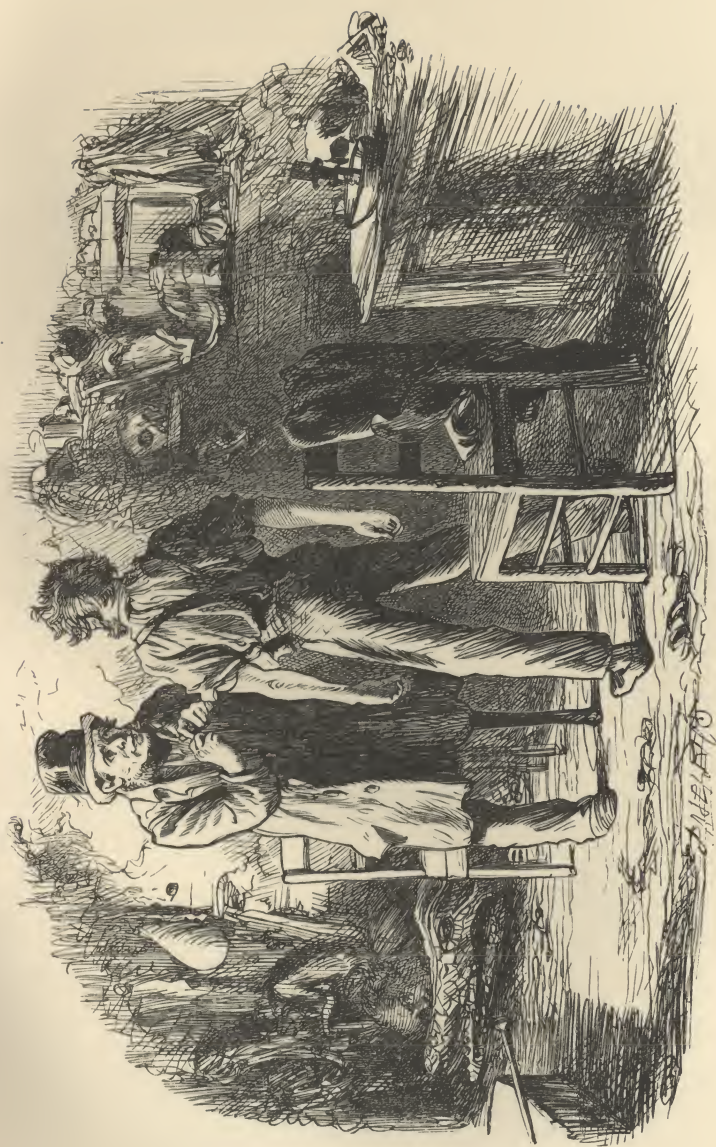
Name, Profession, and Residence (in full) of the Party
 who makes the Assurance. }
 Amount, and Term of Assurance, and by which Table
 Name and Rank, or Profession, of the Person whose
 Life is to be Assured }
 Place and Date of Birth.....
 Age next Birthday
 Present Residence
 Whether employed in any Military, Naval, or Pre-
 ventive Service }
 If resided abroad; where, and for what period?
 If any near Relative have died of Consumption?
 If had the Small Pox, or undergone Vaccination; and
 which? }
 If at any time afflicted with Gout, Asthma, Spitting
 of Blood, Itis, Hernia, or any other disorder
 tending to shorten Life? }
 If the Life proposed for Assurance have been declined
 at any Office? }
 Reference to two persons, to ascertain the present and
 ordinary state of Health and Habits of the Per-
 son whose Life is to be Assured..... }

*Signature of the Person whose
 Life is to be Assured.* }

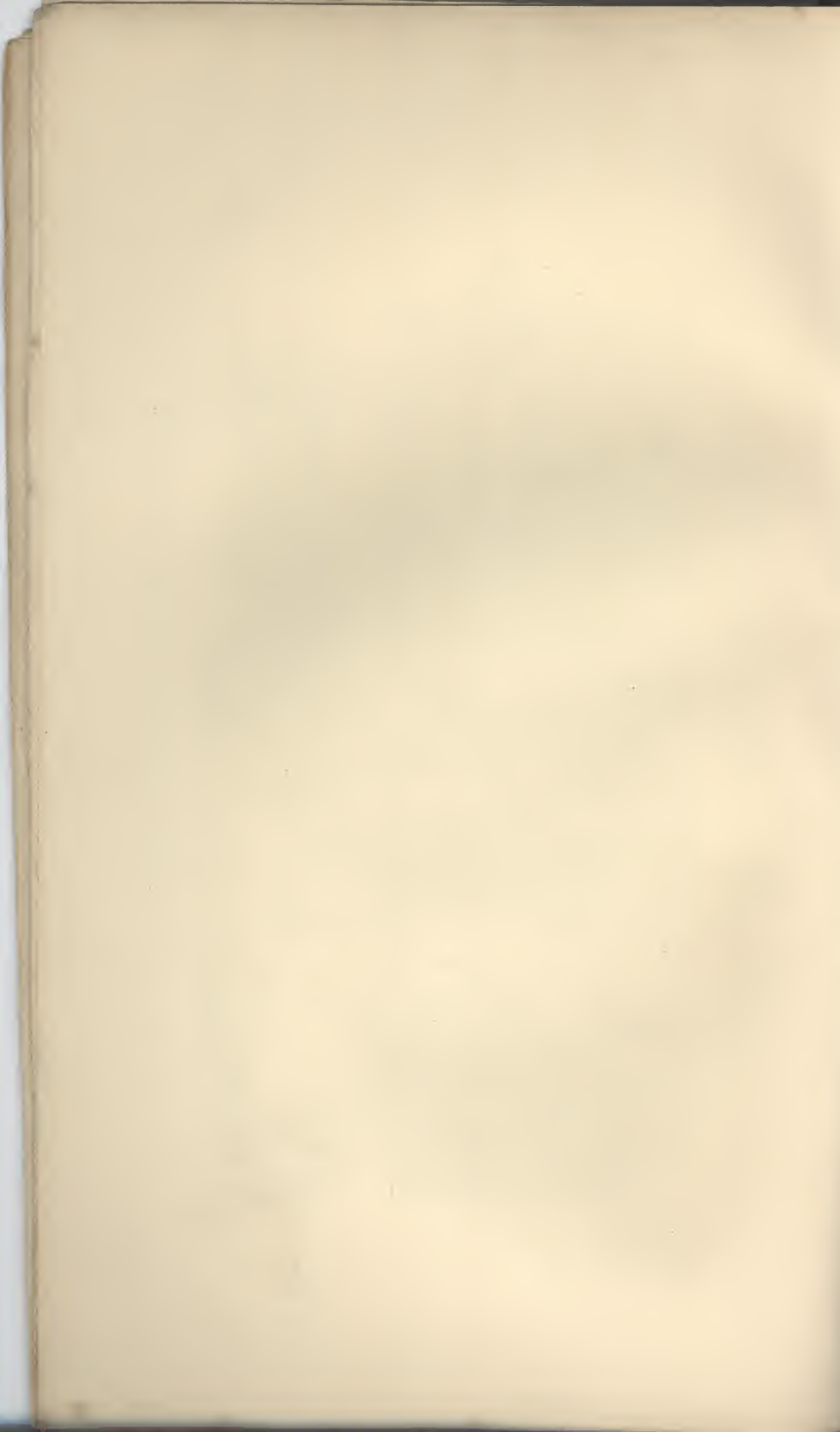




MR. FLEDGEBY DEPARTS ON HIS ERRAND OF MERCY.



MR. WEGG PREPARES A GRINDSTONE FOR MR. BOFFIN'S NOSE.



CHAPTER XI.

IN THE DARK.

THERE was no sleep for Bradley Headstone on that night when Eugene Wrayburn turned so easily in his bed; there was no sleep for little Miss Peecher. Bradley consumed the lonely hours, and consumed himself, in haunting the spot where his careless rival lay a dreaming; little Miss Peecher wore them away in listening for the return home of the master of her heart, and in sorrowfully presaging that much was amiss with him. Yet more was amiss with him than Miss Peecher's simply arranged little work-box of thoughts, fitted with no gloomy and dark recesses, could hold. For, the state of the man was murderous.

The state of the man was murderous, and he knew it. More; he irritated it, with a kind of perverse pleasure akin to that which a sick man sometimes has in irritating a wound upon his body. Tied up all day with his disciplined show upon him, subdued to the performance of his routine of educational tricks, encircled by a gabbling crowd, he broke loose at night like an ill-tamed wild animal. Under his daily restraint, it was his compensation, not his trouble, to give a glance towards his state at night, and to the freedom of its being indulged. If great criminals told the truth—which, being great criminals, they do not—they would very rarely tell of their struggles against the crime. Their struggles are towards it. They buffet with opposing waves, to gain the bloody shore, not to recede from it. This man perfectly comprehended that he hated his rival with his strongest and worst forces, and that if he tracked him to Lizzie Hexam, his so doing would never serve himself with her, or serve her. All his pains were taken, to the end that he might incense himself with the sight of the detested figure in her company and favour, in her place of concealment. And he knew as well what act of his would follow if he did, as he knew that his mother had borne him. Granted, that he may not have held it necessary to make express mention to himself of the one familiar truth any more than of the other.

He knew equally well that he fed his wrath and hatred, and that he accumulated provocation and self-justification, by being made the nightly sport of the reckless and insolent Eugene. Knowing all this, and still always going on with infinite endurance, pains, and perseverance, could his dark soul doubt whither he went?

Baffled, exasperated, and weary, he lingered opposite the Temple gate when it closed on Wrayburn and Lightwood, debating with himself should he go home for that time or should he watch longer. Possessed in his jealousy by the fixed idea that Wrayburn was in the secret, if it were not altogether of his contriving, Bradley was as confident of getting the better of him at last by sullenly sticking to him, as he would have been—and often had been—of mastering any piece of study in the way of his vocation, by the like slow persistent

process. A man of rapid passions and sluggish intelligence, it had served him often and should serve him again.

The suspicion crossed him as he rested in a doorway with his eyes upon the Temple gate, that perhaps she was even concealed in that set of Chambers. It would furnish another reason for Wrayburn's purposeless walks, and it might be. He thought of it and thought of it, until he resolved to steal up the stairs, if the gate-keeper would let him through, and listen. So, the haggard head suspended in the air flitted across the road, like the spectre of one of the many heads erst hoisted upon neighbouring Temple Bar, and stopped before the watchman.

The watchman looked at it, and asked: "Who for?"

"Mr. Wrayburn."

"It's very late."

"He came back with Mr. Lightwood, I know, near upon two hours ago. But if he has gone to bed, I'll put a paper in his letter-box. I am expected."

The watchman said no more, but opened the gate, though rather doubtfully. Seeing, however, that the visitor went straight and fast in the right direction, he seemed satisfied.

The haggard head floated up the dark staircase, and softly descended nearer to the floor outside the outer door of the chambers. The doors of the rooms within, appeared to be standing open. There were rays of candlelight from one of them, and there was the sound of a foot-step going about. There were two voices. The words they uttered were not distinguishable, but they were both the voices of men. In a few moments the voices were silent, and there was no sound of foot-step, and the inner light went out. If Lightwood could have seen the face which kept him awake, staring and listening in the darkness outside the door as he spoke of it, he might have been less disposed to sleep, through the remainder of the night.

"Not there," said Bradley; "but she might have been." The head arose to its former height from the ground, floated down the staircase again, and passed on to the gate. A man was standing there, in parley with the watchman.

"Oh!" said the watchman. "Here he is!"

Perceiving himself to be the antecedent, Bradley looked from the watchman to the man.

"This man is leaving a letter for Mr. Lightwood," the watchman explained, showing it in his hand; "and I was mentioning that a person had just gone up to Mr. Lightwood's chambers. It might be the same business perhaps?"

"No," said Bradley, glancing at the man, who was a stranger to him.

"No," the man assented in a surly way; "my letter—it's wrote by my daughter, but it's mine—is about my business, and my business ain't nobody else's business."

As Bradley passed out at the gate with an undecided foot, he heard it shut behind him, and heard the footstep of the man coming after him.

"Scuse me," said the man, who appeared to have been drinking,

and rather stumbled at him than touched him, to attract his attention; "but might you be acquainted with the T'other Governor?"

"With whom?" asked Bradley.

"With," returned the man, pointing backward over his right shoulder with his right thumb, "the T'other Governor?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Why look here," hooking his proposition on his left-hand fingers with the forefinger of his right. "There's two Governors, ain't there? One and one, two—Lawyer Lightwood, my first finger, he's one, ain't he? Well; might you be acquainted with my middle finger, the T'other?"

"I know quite as much of him," said Bradley, with a frown and a distant look before him, "as I want to know."

"Hooroar!" cried the man. "Hooroar T'other t'other Governor. Hooroar T'otherest Governor! I am of your way of thinkin'."

"Don't make such a noise at this dead hour of the night. What are you talking about?"

"Look here, T'otherest Governor," replied the man, becoming hoarsely confidential. "The T'other Governor he's always joked his jokes agin me, owing, as *I* believe, to my being a honest man as gets my living by the sweat of my brow. Which he ain't, and he don't."

"What is that to me?"

"T'otherest Governor," returned the man in a tone of injured innocence, "if you don't care to hear no more, don't hear no more. You begun it. You said, and likeways showed pretty plain, as you warn't by no means friendly to him. But I don't seek to force my company nor yet my opinions on no man. I am a honest man, that's what I am. Put me in the dock anywhere—I don't care where—and I says, 'My Lord, I am a honest man.' Put me in the witness-box anywhere—I don't care where—and I says the same to his lordship, and I kisses the book. I don't kiss my coat-cuff; I kisses the book."

It was not so much in deference to these strong testimonials to character, as in his restless casting about for any way or help towards the discovery on which he was concentrated, that Bradley Headstone replied: "You needn't take offence. I didn't mean to stop you. You were too loud in the open street; that was all."

"T'otherest Governor," replied Mr. Riderhood, mollified and mysterious, "I know wot it is to be loud, and I know wot it is to be soft. Nat'rally I do. It would be a wonder if I did not, being by the Chris'en name of Roger, which took it arter my own father, which took it from his own father, though which of our fam'ly fust took it nat'ral I will not in any ways mislead you by undertakin' to say. And wishing that your elth may be better than your looks, which your inside must be bad indeed if it's on the footing of your out."

Startled by the implication that his face revealed too much of his mind, Bradley made an effort to clear his brow. It might be worth knowing what this strange man's business was with Lightwood, or Wrayburn, or both, at such an unseasonable hour. He set himself to find out, for the man might prove to be a messenger between those two.

"You call at the 'Temple late," he remarked, with a lumbering show of ease.

"Wish I may die," cried Mr. Riderhood, with a hoarse laugh, "if I warn't a goin' to say the self-same words to you, T'otherest Governor!"

"It chanced so with me," said Bradley, looking disconcertedly about him.

"And it chanced so with me," said Riderhood. "But I don't mind telling you how. Why should I mind telling you? I'm a Deputy Lock-keeper up the river, and I was off duty yes'day, and I shall be on to-morrow."

"Yes?"

"Yes, and I come to London to look arter my private affairs. My private affairs is to get appinted to the Lock as reg'lar keeper at fust hand, and to have the law of a busted B'low-Bridge steamer which drownded of me. I ain't a goin' to be drownded and not paid for it!"

Bradley looked at him, as though he were claiming to be a Ghost.

"The steamer," said Mr. Riderhood, obstinately, "run me down and drownded of me. Interference on the part of other parties brought me round; but I never asked 'em to bring me round, nor yet the steamer never asked 'em to it. I mean to be paid for the life as the steamer took."

"Was that your business at Mr. Lightwood's chambers in the middle of the night?" asked Bradley, eyeing him with distrust.

"That and to get a writing to be fust-hand Lock Keeper. A recommendation in writing being looked for, who else ought to give it to me? As I says in the letter in my daughter's hand, with my mark put to it to make it good in law, Who but you, Lawyer Lightwood, ought to hand over this here stifficate, and who but you ought to go in for damages on my account agin the Steamer? For (as I says under my mark) I have had trouble enough along of you and your friend. If you, Lawyer Lightwood, had backed me good and true, and if the T'other Governor had took me down correct (I says under my mark), I should have been worth money at the present time, instead of having a barge-load of bad names chucked at me, and being forced to eat my words, which is a unsatisfying sort of food wotever a man's appetite! And when you mention the middle of the night, T'otherest Governor," growled Mr. Riderhood, winding up his monotonous summary of his wrongs, "throw your eye on this here bundle under my arm, and bear in mind that I'm a walking back to my Lock, and that the Temple laid upon my line of road."

Bradley Headstone's face had changed during this latter recital, and he had observed the speaker with a more sustained attention.

"Do you know," said he, after a pause, during which they walked on side by side, "that I believe I could tell you your name, if I tried?"

"Prove your opinion," was the answer, accompanied with a stop and a stare. "Try."

"Your name is Riderhood."

"I'm blest if it ain't," returned that gentleman. "But I don't know your'n."

"That's quite another thing," said Bradley. "I never supposed you did."

As Bradley walked on meditating, the Rogue walked on at his side muttering. The purport of the muttering was: "that Rogue Riderhood, by George! seemed to be made public property on, now, and that every man seemed to think himself free to handle his name as if it was a Street Pump." The purport of the meditating was: "Here is an instrument. Can I use it?"

They had walked along the Strand, and into Pall Mall, and had turned up-hill towards Hyde Park Corner; Bradley Headstone waiting on the pace and lead of Riderhood, and leaving him to indicate the course. So slow were the schoolmaster's thoughts, and so indistinct his purposes when they were but tributary to the one absorbing purpose—or rather when, like dark trees under a stormy sky, they only lined the long vista at the end of which he saw those two figures of Wrayburn and Lizzie on which his eyes were fixed—that at least a good half-mile was traversed before he spoke again. Even then, it was only to ask:

"Where is your Lock?"

"Twenty mile and odd—call it five-and-twenty mile and odd, if you like—up stream," was the sullen reply.

"How is it called?"

"Plashwater Weir Mill Lock."

"Suppose I was to offer you five shillings; what then?"

"Why, then, I'd take it," said Mr. Riderhood.

The schoolmaster put his hand in his pocket, and produced two half-crowns, and placed them in Mr. Riderhood's palm: who stopped at a convenient doorstep to ring them both, before acknowledging their receipt.

"There's one thing about you, T'otherest Governor," said Riderhood, faring on again, "as looks well and goes fur. You're a ready-money man. Now;" when he had carefully pocketed the coins on that side of himself which was furthest from his new friend; "what's this for?"

"For you."

"Why, o' course I know *that*," said Riderhood, as arguing something that was self-evident. "O' course I know very well as no man in his right senses would suppose as anythink would make me give it up agin when I'd once got it. But what do you want for it?"

"I don't know that I want anything for it. Or if I do want anything for it, I don't know what it is." Bradley gave this answer in a stolid, vacant, and self-communing manner, which Mr. Riderhood found very extraordinary.

"You have no goodwill towards this Wrayburn," said Bradley, coming to the name in a reluctant and forced way, as if he were dragged to it.

"No."

"Neither have I."

Riderhood nodded, and asked: "Is it for that?"

"It's as much for that as anything else. It's something to be agreed with, on a subject that occupies so much of one's thoughts."

"It don't agree with *you*," returned Mr. Riderhood, bluntly. "No! It don't, T'otherest Governor, and it's no use a lookin' as if you wanted

to make out that it did. I tell you it rankles in you. It rankles in you, rusts in you, and poisons you."

"Say that it does so," returned Bradley with quivering lips; "is there no cause for it?"

"Cause enough, I'll bet a pound!" cried Mr. Riderhood.

"Haven't you yourself declared that the fellow has heaped provocations, insults, and affronts on you, or something to that effect? He has done the same by me. He is made of venomous insults and affronts, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot. Are you so hopeful or so stupid, as not to know that he and the other will treat your application with contempt, and light their cigars with it?"

"I shouldn't wonder if they did, by George!" said Riderhood, turning angry.

"If they did! They will. Let me ask you a question. I know something more than your name about you; I knew something about Gaffer Hexam. When did you last set eyes upon his daughter?"

"When did I last set eyes upon his daughter, T'otherest Governor?" repeated Mr. Riderhood, growing intentionally slower of comprehension as the other quickened in his speech.

"Yes. Not to speak to her. 'To see her—anywhere?"

The Rogue had got the clue he wanted, though he held it with a clumsy hand. Looking perplexedly at the passionate face, as if he were trying to work out a sum in his mind, he slowly answered: "I ain't set eyes upon her—never once—not since the day of Gaffer's death."

"You know her well, by sight?"

"I should think I did! No one better."

"And you know him as well?"

"Who's him?" asked Riderhood, taking off his hat and rubbing his forehead, as he directed a dull look at his questioner.

"Curse the name! Is it so agreeable to you that you want to hear it again?"

"Oh! *Him!*" said Riderhood, who had craftily worked the school-master into this corner, that he might again take note of his face under its evil possession. "I'd know *him* among a thousand."

"Did you ——" Bradley tried to ask it quietly; but, do what he might with his voice, he could not subdue his face;—"did you ever see them together?"

(The Rogue had got the clue in both hands now.)

"I see 'em together, T'otherest Governor, on the very day when Gaffer was towed ashore."

Bradley could have hidden a reserved piece of information from the sharp eyes of a whole inquisitive class, but he could not veil from the eyes of the ignorant Riderhood the withheld question next in his breast. "You shall put it plain if you want it answered," thought the Rogue, doggedly; "I ain't a-going a volunteering."

"Well! was he insolent to her too?" asked Bradley after a struggle. "Or did he make a show of being kind to her?"

"He made a show of being most uncommon kind to her," said Riderhood. "By George! now I——"

His flying off at a tangent was indisputably natural. Bradley looked at him for the reason.

"Now I think of it," said Mr. Riderhood, evasively, for he was substituting those words for "Now I see you so jealous," which was the phrase really in his mind; "P'raps he went and took me down wrong, a purpose, on account o' being sweet upon her!"

The baseness of confirming him in this suspicion or pretence of one (for he could not have really entertained it), was a line's breadth beyond the mark the schoolmaster had reached. The baseness of communing and intriguing with the fellow who would have set that stain upon her, and upon her brother too, was attained. The line's breadth further, lay beyond. He made no reply, but walked on with a lowering face.

What he might gain by this acquaintance, he could not work out in his slow and cumbrous thoughts. The man had an injury against the object of his hatred, and that was something; though it was less than he supposed, for there dwelt in the man no such deadly rage and resentment as burned in his own breast. The man knew her, and might by a fortunate chance see her, or hear of her; that was something, as enlisting one pair of eyes and ears the more. The man was a bad man, and willing enough to be in his pay. That was something, for his own state and purpose were as bad as bad could be, and he seemed to derive a vague support from the possession of a congenial instrument, though it might never be used.

Suddenly he stood still, and asked Riderhood point-blank if he knew where she was? Clearly, he did not know. He asked Riderhood if he would be willing, in case any intelligence of her, or of Wrayburn as seeking her or associating with her, should fall in his way, to communicate it if it were paid for? He would be very willing indeed. He was "agin 'em both," he said with an oath, and for why? 'Cause they had both stood betwixt him and his getting his living by the sweat of his brow.

"It will not be long then," said Bradley Headstone, after some more discourse to this effect, "before we see one another again. Here is the country road, and here is the day. Both have come upon me by surprise."

"But, T'otherest Governor," urged Mr. Riderhood, "I don't know where to find you."

"It is of no consequence. I know where to find you, and I'll come to your Lock."

"But, T'otherest Governor," urged Mr. Riderhood again, "no luck never come yet of a dry acquaintance. Let's wet it, in a mouthful of rum and milk, T'otherest Governor."

Bradley assenting, went with him into an early public-house, haunted by unsavoury smells of musty hay and stale straw, where returning carts, farmers' men, gaunt dogs, fowls of a beery breed, and certain human nightbirds fluttering home to roost, were solacing themselves after their several manners; and where not one of the nightbirds hovering about the sloppy bar failed to discern at a glance in the passion-wasted nightbird with respectable feathers, the worst nightbird of all.

An inspiration of affection for a half-drunken carter going his way led to Mr. Riderhood's being elevated on a high heap of baskets on a waggon, and pursuing his journey recumbent on his back with his head on his bundle. Bradley then turned to retrace his steps, and by-and-by struck off through little-traversed ways, and by-and-by reached school and home. Up came the sun to find him washed and brushed, methodically dressed in decent black coat and waistcoat, decent formal black tie, and pepper-and-salt pantaloons, with his decent silver watch in its pocket, and its decent hair-guard round his neck : a scholastic huntsman clad for the field, with his fresh pack yelping and barking around him.

Yet more really bewitched than the miserable creatures of the much-lamented times, who accused themselves of impossibilities under a contagion of horror and the strongly suggestive influences of Torture, he had been ridden hard by Evil Spirits in the night that was newly gone. He had been spurred and whipped and heavily sweated. If a record of the sport had usurped the places of the peaceful texts from Scripture on the wall, the most advanced of the scholars might have taken fright and run away from the master.

CHAPTER XII.

MEANING MISCHIEF.

Up came the sun, streaming all over London, and in its glorious impartiality even condescending to make prismatic sparkles in the whiskers of Mr. Alfred Lammle as he sat at breakfast. In need of some brightening from without, was Mr. Alfred Lammle, for he had the air of being dull enough within, and looked grievously discontented.

Mrs. Alfred Lammle faced her lord. The happy pair of swindlers, with the comfortable tie between them that each had swindled the other, sat moodily observant of the tablecloth. Things looked so gloomy in the breakfast-room, albeit on the sunny side of Sackville Street, that any of the family tradespeople glancing through the blinds might have taken the hint to send in his account and press for it. But this, indeed, most of the family tradespeople had already done, without the hint.

"It seems to me," said Mrs. Lammle, "that you have had no money at all, ever since we have been married."

"What seems to you," said Mr. Lammle, "to have been the case, may possibly have been the case. It doesn't matter."

Was it the speciality of Mr. and Mrs. Lammle, or does it ever obtain with other loving couples? In these matrimonial dialogues they never addressed each other, but always some invisible presence that appeared to take a station about midway between them. Perhaps the skeleton in the cupboard comes out to be talked to, on such domestic occasions?

"I have never seen any money in the house," said Mrs. Lammle to the skeleton, "except my own annuity. That I swear."

"You needn't take the trouble of swearing," said Mr. Lammle to the skeleton; "once more, it doesn't matter. You never turned your annuity to so good an account."

"Good an account! In what way?" asked Mrs. Lammle.

"In the way of getting credit, and living well," said Mr. Lammle.

Perhaps the skeleton laughed scornfully on being intrusted with this question and this answer; certainly Mrs. Lammle did, and Mr. Lammle did.

"And what is to happen next?" asked Mrs. Lammle of the skeleton.

"Smash is to happen next," said Mr. Lammle to the same authority.

After this, Mrs. Lammle looked disdainfully at the skeleton—without carrying the look on to Mr. Lammle—and drooped her eyes. After that, Mr. Lammle did exactly the same thing, and drooped *his* eyes. A servant then entering with toast, the skeleton retired into the closet, and shut itself up.

"Sophronia," said Mr. Lammle, when the servant had withdrawn. And then, very much louder: "Sophronia?"

"Well?"

"Attend to me, if you please." He eyed her sternly until she did attend, and then went on. "I want to take counsel with you. Come, come; no more trifling. You know our league and covenant. We are to work together for our joint interest, and you are as knowing a hand as I am. We shouldn't be together, if you were not. What's to be done? We are hemmed into a corner. What shall we do?"

"Have you no scheme on foot that will bring in anything?"

Mr. Lammle plunged into his whiskers for reflection, and came out hopeless: "No; as adventurers we are obliged to play rash games for chances of high winnings, and there has been a run of luck against us."

She was resuming, "Have you nothing ——" when he stopped her.

"We, Sophronia. We, we, we."

"Have we nothing to sell?"

"Deuce a bit. I have given a Jew a bill of sale on this furniture, and he could take it to-morrow, to-day, now. He would have taken it before now, I believe, but for Fledgeby."

"What has Fledgeby to do with him?"

"Knew him. Cautioned me against him before I got into his claws. Couldn't persuade him then, in behalf of somebody else."

"Do you mean that Fledgeby has at all softened him towards you?"

"Us, Sophronia. Us, us, us."

"Towards us?"

"I mean that the Jew has not yet done what he might have done, and that Fledgeby takes the credit of having got him to hold his hand."

"Do you believe Fledgeby?"

"Sophronia, I never believe anybody. I never have, my dear, since I believed you. But it looks like it."

Having given her this back-handed reminder of her mutinous observations to the skeleton, Mr. Lammle rose from table—perhaps, the better to conceal a smile, and a white dint or two about his nose—and took a turn on the carpet and came to the hearthrug.

"If we could have packed the brute off with Georgiana;—but however; that's spilled milk."

As Lammle, standing gathering up the skirts of his dressing-gown with his back to the fire, said this, looking down at his wife, she turned pale and looked down at the ground. With a sense of disloyalty upon her, and perhaps with a sense of personal danger—for she was afraid of him—even afraid of his hand and afraid of his foot, though he had never done her violence—she hastened to put herself right in his eyes.

"If we could borrow money, Alfred——"

"Beg money, borrow money, or steal money. It would be all one to us, Sophronia," her husband struck in.

"—Then, we could weather this?"

"No doubt. To offer another original and undeniable remark, Sophronia, two and two make four."

But, seeing that she was turning something in her mind, he gathered up the skirts of his dressing-gown again, and, tucking them under one arm, and collecting his ample whiskers in his other hand, kept his eye upon her, silently.

"It is natural, Alfred," she said, looking up with some timidity into his face, "to think in such an emergency of the richest people we know, and the simplest."

"Just so, Sophronia."

"The Boffins."

"Just so, Sophronia."

"Is there nothing to be done with them?"

"What is there to be done with them, Sophronia?"

She cast about in her thoughts again, and he kept his eye upon her as before.

"Of course I have repeatedly thought of the Boffins, Sophronia," he resumed, after a fruitless silence; "but I have seen my way to nothing. They are well guarded. That infernal Secretary stands between them and—people of merit."

"If he could be got rid of?" said she, brightening a little, after more casting about.

"Take time, Sophronia," observed her watchful husband, in a patronizing manner.

"If working him out of the way could be presented in the light of a service to Mr. Boffin?"

"Take time, Sophronia."

"We have remarked lately, Alfred, that the old man is turning very suspicious and distrustful."

"Miserly too, my dear; which is far the most unpromising for us. Nevertheless, take time, Sophronia, take time."

She took time and then said:

"Suppose we should address ourselves to that tendency in him of which we have made ourselves quite sure. Suppose my conscience——"

"And we know what a conscience it is, my soul. Yes?"

"Suppose my conscience should not allow me to keep to myself any longer what that upstart girl told me of the Secretary's having made a declaration to her. Suppose my conscience should oblige me to repeat it to Mr. Boffin."

"I rather like that," said Lammle.

"Suppose I so repeated it to Mr. Boffin, as to insinuate that my sensitive delicacy and honor——"

"Very good words, Sophronia."

"—As to insinuate that *our* sensitive delicacy and honor," she resumed, with a bitter stress upon the phrase, "would not allow us to be silent parties to so mercenary and designing a speculation on the Secretary's part, and so gross a breach of faith towards his confiding employer. Suppose I had imparted my virtuous uneasiness to my excellent husband, and he had said, in his integrity, 'Sophronia, you must immediately disclose this to Mr. Boffin.'"

"Once more, Sophronia," observed Lammle, changing the leg on which he stood, "I rather like that."

"You remark that he is well guarded," she pursued. "I think so too. But if this should lead to his discharging his Secretary, there would be a weak place made."

"Go on expounding, Sophronia. I begin to like this very much."

"Having, in our unimpeachable rectitude, done him the service of opening his eyes to the treachery of the person he trusted, we shall have established a claim upon him and a confidence with him. Whether it can be made much of, or little of, we must wait—because we can't help it—to see. Probably we shall make the most of it that is to be made."

"Probably," said Lammle.

"Do you think it impossible," she asked, in the same cold plotting way, "that you might replace the Secretary?"

"Not impossible, Sophronia. It might be brought about. At any rate it might be skilfully led up to."

She nodded her understanding of the hint, as she looked at the fire. "Mr. Lammle," she said, musingly: not without a slight ironical touch: "Mr. Lammle would be so delighted to do anything in his power. Mr. Lammle, himself a man of business as well as a capitalist. Mr. Lammle, accustomed to be intrusted with the most delicate affairs. Mr. Lammle, who has managed my own little fortune so admirably, but who, to be sure, began to make his reputation with the advantage of being a man of property, above temptation, and beyond suspicion."

Mr. Lammle smiled, and even patted her on the head. In his sinister relish of the scheme, as he stood above her, making it the subject of his cogitations, he seemed to have twice as much nose on his face as he had ever had in his life.

He stood pondering, and she sat looking at the dusty fire without

moving, for some time. But, the moment he began to speak again she looked up with a wince and attended to him, as if that double-dealing of hers had been in her mind, and the fear were revived in her of his hand or his foot.

"It appears to me, Sophronia, that you have omitted one branch of the subject. Perhaps not, for women understand women. We might oust the girl herself?"

Mrs. Lammle shook her head. "She has an immensely strong hold upon them both, Alfred. Not to be compared with that of a paid secretary."

"But the dear child," said Lammle, with a crooked smile, "ought to have been open with her benefactor and benefactress. The darling love ought to have reposed unbounded confidence in her benefactor and benefactress."

Sophronia shook her head again.

"Well! Women understand women," said her husband, rather disappointed. "I don't press it. It might be the making of our fortune to make a clean sweep of them both. With me to manage the property, and my wife to manage the people—Whew!"

Again shaking her head, she returned: "They will never quarrel with the girl. They will never punish the girl. We must accept the girl, rely upon it."

"Well!" cried Lammle, shrugging his shoulders, "so be it: only always remember that we don't want her."

"Now, the sole remaining question is," said Mrs. Lammle, "when shall I begin?"

"You cannot begin too soon, Sophronia. As I have told you, the condition of our affairs is desperate, and may be blown upon at any moment."

"I must secure Mr. Boffin alone, Alfred. If his wife was present, she would throw oil upon the waters. I know I should fail to move him to an angry outburst, if his wife was there. And as to the girl herself—as I am going to betray her confidence, she is equally out of the question."

"It wouldn't do to write for an appointment?" said Lammle.

"No, certainly not. They would wonder among themselves why I wrote, and I want to have him wholly unprepared."

"Call, and ask to see him alone?" suggested Lammle.

"I would rather not do that either. Leave it to me. Spare me the little carriage for to-day, and for to-morrow (if I don't succeed to-day), and I'll lie in wait for him."

It was barely settled when a manly form was seen to pass the windows and heard to knock and ring. "Here's Fledgeby," said Lammle. "He admires you, and has a high opinion of you. I'll be out. Coax him to use his influence with the Jew. His name is Riah, of the House of Pubsey and Co." Adding these words under his breath, lest he should be audible in the erect ears of Mr. Fledgeby, through two keyholes and the hall, Lammle, making signals of discretion to his servant, went softly up stairs.

"Mr. Fledgeby," said Mrs. Lammle, giving him a very gracious reception, "so glad to see you! My poor dear Alfred, who is greatly

worried just now about his affairs, went out rather early. Dear Mr. Fledgeby, do sit down."

Dear Mr. Fledgeby did sit down, and satisfied himself (or, judging from the expression of his countenance, *dissatisfied* himself) that nothing new had occurred in the way of whisker-sprout since he came round the corner from the Albany.

"Dear Mr. Fledgeby, it was needless to mention to you that my poor dear Alfred is much worried about his affairs at present, for he has told me what a comfort you are to him in his temporary difficulties, and what a great service you have rendered him."

"Oh!" said Mr. Fledgeby.

"Yes," said Mrs. Lammle.

"I didn't know," remarked Mr. Fledgeby, trying a new part of his chair, "but that Lammle might be reserved about his affairs."

"Not to me," said Mrs. Lammle, with deep feeling.

"Oh, indeed?" said Fledgeby.

"Not to me, dear Mr. Fledgeby. I am his wife."

"Yes. I—I always understood so," said Mr. Fledgeby.

"And as the wife of Alfred, may I, dear Mr. Fledgeby, wholly without his authority or knowledge, as I am sure your discernment will perceive, entreat you to continue that great service, and once more use your well-earned influence with Mr. Riah for a little more indulgence? The name I have heard Alfred mention, tossing in his dreams, is Riah; is it not?"

"The name of the Creditor is Riah," said Mr. Fledgeby, with a rather uncompromising accent on his noun-substantive. "Saint Mary Axe. Pubsey and Co."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Mrs. Lammle, clasping her hands with a certain gushing wildness. "Pubsey and Co.!"

"The pleading of the feminine——" Mr. Fledgeby began, and there stuck so long for a word to get on with, that Mrs. Lammle offered him sweetly, "Heart?"

"No," said Mr. Fledgeby, "Gender—is ever what a man is bound to listen to, and I wish it rested with myself. But this Riah is a nasty one, Mrs. Lammle; he really is."

"Not if *you* speak to him, dear Mr. Fledgeby."

"Upon my soul and body he is!" said Fledgeby.

"Try. Try once more, dearest Mr. Fledgeby. What is there you cannot do, if you will!"

"Thank you," said Fledgeby, "you're very complimentary to say so. I don't mind trying him again, at your request. But of course I can't answer for the consequences. Riah is a tough subject, and when he says he'll do a thing, he'll do it."

"Exactly so," cried Mrs. Lammle, "and when he says to you he'll wait, he'll wait."

("She is a devilish clever woman," thought Fledgeby. "I didn't see that opening, but she spies it out and cuts into it as soon as it's made.")

"In point of fact, dear Mr. Fledgeby," Mrs. Lammle went on in a very interesting manner, "not to affect concealment of Alfred's hopes,

to you who are so much his friend, there is a distant break in his horizon."

This figure of speech seemed rather mysterious to Fascination Fledgeby, who said, "There's a what in his—eh?"

"Alfred, dear Mr. Fledgeby, discussed with me this very morning before he went out, some prospects he has, which might entirely change the aspect of his present troubles."

"Really?" said Fledgeby.

"O yes!" Here Mrs. Lammle brought her handkerchief into play. "And you know, dear Mr. Fledgeby—you who study the human heart, and study the world—what an affliction it would be to lose position and to lose credit, when ability to tide over a very short time might save all appearances."

"Oh!" said Fledgeby. "Then you think, Mrs. Lammle, that if Lammle got time, he wouldn't burst up?—To use an expression," Mr. Fledgeby apologetically explained, "which is adopted in the Money Market."

"Indeed yes. Truly, truly, yes!"

"That makes all the difference," said Fledgeby. "I'll make a point of seeing Riah at once."

"Blessings on you, dearest Mr. Fledgeby!"

"Not at all," said Fledgeby. She gave him her hand. "The hand," said Mr. Fledgeby, "of a lovely and superior-minded female is ever the repayment of a——"

"Noble action!" said Mrs. Lammle, extremely anxious to get rid of him.

"It wasn't what I was going to say," returned Fledgeby, who never would, under any circumstances, accept a suggested expression, "but you're very complimentary. May I imprint a—a one—upon it? Good morning!"

"I may depend upon your promptitude, dearest Mr. Fledgeby?"

Said Fledgeby, looking back at the door and respectfully kissing his hand, "You may depend upon it."

In fact, Mr. Fledgeby sped on his errand of mercy through the streets, at so brisk a rate that his feet might have been winged by all the good spirits that wait on Generosity. They might have taken up their station in his breast, too, for he was blithe and merry. There was quite a fresh trill in his voice, when, arriving at the counting-house in St. Mary Axe, and finding it for the moment empty, he trolled forth at the foot of the staircase: "Now, Judah, what are you up to there?"

The old man appeared, with his accustomed deference.

"Holloa!" said Fledgeby, falling back, with a wink. "You mean mischief, Jerusalem!"

The old man raised his eyes inquiringly.

"Yes you do," said Fledgeby. "Oh, you sinner! Oh, you dodger! What! You're going to act upon that bill of sale at Lammle's, are you? Nothing will turn you, won't it? You won't be put off for another single minute, won't you?"

Ordered to immediate action by the master's tone and look, the old man took up his hat from the little counter where it lay.

"You have been told that he might pull through it, if you didn't go in to win, Wide-Awake; have you?" said Fledgeby. "And it's not your game that he should pull through it; ain't it? You having got security, and there being enough to pay you? Oh, you Jew!"

The old man stood irresolute and uncertain for a moment, as if there might be further instructions for him in reserve.

"Do I go, sir?" he at length asked in a low voice.

"Asks me if he is going!" exclaimed Fledgeby. "Asks me, as if he didn't know his own purpose! Asks me, as if he hadn't got his hat on ready! Asks me, as if his sharp old eye—why, it cuts like a knife—wasn't looking at his walking-stick by the door!"

"Do I go, sir?"

"Do you go?" sneered Fledgeby. "Yes, you do go. Toddle, Judah!"

CHAPTER XIII.

GIVE A DOG A BAD NAME, AND HANG HIM.

FASCINATION FLEDGEBY, left alone in the counting-house, strolled about with his hat on one side, whistling, and investigating the drawers, and prying here and there for any small evidences of his being cheated, but could find none. "Not his merit that he don't cheat me," was Mr. Fledgeby's commentary delivered with a wink, "but my precaution." He then with a lazy grandeur asserted his rights as lord of Pubsey and Co. by poking his cane at the stools and boxes, and spitting in the fireplace, and so loitered royally to the window and looked out into the narrow street, with his small eyes just peering over the top of Pubsey and Co.'s blind. As a blind in more senses than one, it reminded him that he was alone in the counting-house with the front door open. He was moving away to shut it, lest he should be injudiciously identified with the establishment, when he was stopped by some one coming to the door.

This some one was the dolls' dressmaker, with a little basket on her arm, and her crutch stick in her hand. Her keen eyes had espied Mr. Fledgeby before Mr. Fledgeby had espied her, and he was paralyzed in his purpose of shutting her out, not so much by her approaching the door, as by her favouring him with a shower of nods, the instant he saw her. This advantage she improved by hobbling up the steps with such despatch that before Mr. Fledgeby could take measures for her finding nobody at home, she was face to face with him in the counting-house.

"Hope I see you well, sir," said Miss Wren. "Mr. Riah in?"

Fledgeby had dropped into a chair, in the attitude of one waiting wearily. "I suppose he will be back soon," he replied; "he has cut out and left me expecting him back, in an odd way. Haven't I seen you before?"

"Once before—if you had your eyesight," replied Miss Wren; the conditional clause in an under-tone.

"When you were carrying on some games up at the top of the house. I remember. How's your friend?"

"I have more friends than one, sir, I hope," replied Miss Wren. "Which friend?"

"Never mind," said Mr. Fledgeby, shutting up one eye, "any of your friends, all your friends. Are they pretty tolerable?"

Somewhat confounded, Miss Wren parried the pleasantry, and sat down in a corner behind the door, with her basket in her lap. By-and-by, she said, breaking a long and patient silence:

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I am used to find Mr. Riah at this time, and so I generally come at this time. I only want to buy my poor little two shillings' worth of waste. Perhaps you'll kindly let me have it, and I'll trot off to my work."

"I let you have it?" said Fledgeby, turning his head towards her; for he had been sitting blinking at the light, and feeling his cheek. "Why, you don't really suppose that I have anything to do with the place, or the business; do you?"

"Suppose?" exclaimed Miss Wren. "He said, that day, you were the master!"

"The old cock in black said? Riah said? Why, he'd say anything."

"Well; but you said so too," returned Miss Wren. "Or at least you took on like the master, and didn't contradict him."

"One of his dodges," said Mr. Fledgeby, with a cool and contemptuous shrug. "He's made of dodges. He said to me, 'Come up to the top of the house, sir, and I'll show you a handsome girl. But I shall call you the master.' So I went up to the top of the house and he showed me the handsome girl (very well worth looking at she was), and I was called the master. I don't know why. I dare say he don't. He loves a dodge for its own sake; being," added Mr. Fledgeby, after casting about for an expressive phrase, "the dodgerest of all the dodgers."

"Oh my head!" cried the dolls' dressmaker, holding it with both her hands, as if it were cracking. "You can't mean what you say."

"I can, my little woman," retorted Fledgeby, "and I do, I assure you."

This repudiation was not only an act of deliberate policy on Fledgeby's part, in case of his being surprised by any other caller, but was also a retort upon Miss Wren for her over-sharpness, and a pleasant instance of his humour as regarded the old Jew. "He has got a bad name as an old Jew, and he is paid for the use of it, and I'll have my money's worth out of him." This was Fledgeby's habitual reflection in the way of business, and it was sharpened just now by the old man's presuming to have a secret from him: though of the secret itself, as annoying somebody else whom he disliked, he by no means disapproved.

Miss Wren with a fallen countenance sat behind the door looking thoughtfully at the ground, and the long and patient silence had again set in for some time, when the expression of Mr. Fledgeby's face betokened that through the upper portion of the door, which was of glass, he saw some one faltering on the brink of the counting-house. Presently there was a rustle and a tap, and then some more rustling and another tap. Fledgeby taking no notice, the door was

at length softly opened, and the dried face of a mild little elderly gentleman looked in.

"Mr. Riah?" said this visitor, very politely.

"I am waiting for him, sir," returned Mr. Fledgeby. "He went out and left me here. I expect him back every minute. Perhaps you had better take a chair."

The gentleman took a chair, and put his hand to his forehead, as if he were in a melancholy frame of mind. Mr. Fledgeby eyed him aside, and seemed to relish his attitude.

"A fine day, sir," remarked Fledgeby.

The little dried gentleman was so occupied with his own depressed reflections that he did not notice the remark until the sound of Mr. Fledgeby's voice had died out of the counting-house. Then he started, and said: "I beg your pardon, sir. I fear you spoke to me?"

"I said," remarked Fledgeby, a little louder than before, "it was a fine day."

"I beg your pardon. I beg your pardon. Yes."

Again the little dried gentleman put his hand to his forehead, and again Mr. Fledgeby seemed to enjoy his doing it. When the gentleman changed his attitude with a sigh, Fledgeby spake with a grin.

"Mr. Twemlow, I think?"

The dried gentleman seemed much surprised.

"Had the pleasure of dining with you at Lammle's," said Fledgeby. "Even have the honor of being a connexion of yours. An unexpected sort of place this to meet in; but one never knows, when one gets into the City, what people one may knock up against. I hope you have your health, and are enjoying yourself."

There might have been a touch of impertinence in the last words; on the other hand, it might have been but the native grace of Mr. Fledgeby's manner. Mr. Fledgeby sat on a stool with a foot on the rail of another stool, and his hat on. Mr. Twemlow had uncovered on looking in at the door, and remained so.

Now the conscientious Twemlow, knowing what he had done to thwart the gracious Fledgeby, was particularly disconcerted by this encounter. He was as ill at ease as a gentleman well could be. He felt himself bound to conduct himself stiffly towards Fledgeby, and he made him a distant bow. Fledgeby made his small eyes smaller in taking special note of his manner. The dolls' dressmaker sat in her corner behind the door, with her eyes on the ground and her hands folded on her basket, holding her crutch-stick between them, and appearing to take no heed of anything.

"He's a long time," muttered Mr. Fledgeby, looking at his watch. "What time may you make it, Mr. Twemlow?"

Mr. Twemlow made it ten minutes past twelve, sir.

"As near as a toucher," assented Fledgeby. "I hope, Mr. Twemlow, your business here may be of a more agreeable character than mine."

"Thank you, sir," said Mr. Twemlow.

Fledgeby again made his small eyes smaller, as he glanced with

great complacency at Twemlow, who was timorously tapping the table with a folded letter.

"What I know of Mr. Riah," said Fledgeby, with a very disparaging utterance of his name, "leads me to believe that this is about the shop for disagreeable business. I have always found him the bitingest and tightest screw in London."

Mr. Twemlow acknowledged the remark with a little distant bow. It evidently made him nervous.

"So much so," pursued Fledgeby, "that if it wasn't to be true to a friend, nobody should catch me waiting here a single minute. But if you have friends in adversity, stand by them. That's what I say and act up to."

The equitable Twemlow felt that this sentiment, irrespective of the utterer, demanded his cordial assent. "You are very right, sir," he rejoined with spirit. "You indicate the generous and manly course."

"Glad to have your approbation," returned Fledgeby. "It's a coincidence, Mr. Twemlow;" here he descended from his perch, and sauntered towards him; "that the friends I am standing by to-day are the friends at whose house I met you! The Lammles. She's a very taking and agreeable woman?"

Conscience smote the gentle Twemlow pale. "Yes," he said. "She is."

"And when she appealed to me this morning, to come and try what I could do to pacify their creditor, this Mr. Riah—that I certainly have gained some little influence with in transacting business for another friend, but nothing like so much as she supposes—and when a woman like that spoke to me as her dearest Mr. Fledgeby, and shed tears—why what could I do, you know?"

Twemlow gasped "Nothing but come."

"Nothing but come. And so I came. But why," said Fledgeby, putting his hands in his pockets and counterfeiting deep meditation, "why Riah should have started up, when I told him that the Lammles entreated him to hold over a Bill of Sale he has on all their effects; and why he should have cut out, saying he would be back directly; and why he should have left me here alone so long; I cannot understand."

The chivalrous Twemlow, Knight of the Simple Heart, was not in a condition to offer any suggestion. He was too penitent, too remorseful. For the first time in his life he had done an underhanded action, and he had done wrong. He had secretly interposed against this confiding young man, for no better real reason than because the young man's ways were not his ways.

But, the confiding young man proceeded to heap coals of fire on his sensitive head.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Twemlow; you see I am acquainted with the nature of the affairs that are transacted here. Is there anything I can do for you here? You have always been brought up as a gentleman, and never as a man of business;" another touch of possible impertinence in this place; "and perhaps you are but a poor man of business. What else is to be expected!"

"I am even a poorer man of business than I am a man, sir," returned Twemlow, "and I could hardly express my deficiency in a stronger way. I really do not so much as clearly understand my position in the matter on which I am brought here. But there are reasons which make me very delicate of accepting your assistance. I am greatly, greatly, disinclined to profit by it. I don't deserve it."

Good childish creature! Condemned to a passage through the world by such narrow little dimly-lighted ways, and picking up so few specks or spots on the road!

"Perhaps," said Fledgeby, "you may be a little proud of entering on the topic,—having been brought up as a gentleman."

"It's not that, sir," returned Twemlow, "it's not that. I hope I distinguish between true pride and false pride."

"I have no pride at all, myself," said Fledgeby, "and perhaps I don't cut things so fine as to know one from t'other. But I know this is a place where even a man of business needs his wits about him; and if mine can be of any use to you here, you're welcome to them."

"You are very good," said Twemlow, faltering. "But I am most unwilling——"

"I don't, you know," proceeded Fledgeby with an ill-favoured glance, "entertain the vanity of supposing that my wits could be of any use to you in society, but they might be here. You cultivate society and society cultivates you, but Mr. Riah's not society. In society, Mr. Riah is kept dark; eh, Mr. Twemlow?"

Twemlow, much disturbed, and with his hand fluttering about his forehead, replied: "Quite true."

The confiding young man besought him to state his case. The innocent Twemlow, expecting Fledgeby to be astounded by what he should unfold, and not for an instant conceiving the possibility of its happening every day, but treating of it as a terrible phenomenon occurring in the course of ages, related how that he had had a deceased friend, a married civil officer with a family, who had wanted money for change of place on change of post, and how he, Twemlow, had "given him his name," with the usual, but in the eyes of Twemlow almost incredible result that he had been left to repay what he had never had. How, in the course of years, he had reduced the principal by trifling sums, "having," said Twemlow, "always to observe great economy, being in the enjoyment of a fixed income limited in extent, and that depending on the munificence of a certain nobleman," and had always pinched the full interest out of himself with punctual pinches. How he had come, in course of time, to look upon this one only debt of his life as a regular quarterly drawback, and no worse, when "his name" had some way fallen into the possession of Mr. Riah, who had sent him notice to redeem it by paying up in full, in one plump sum, or take tremendous consequences. This, with hazy remembrances of how he had been carried to some office to "confess judgment" (as he recollected the phrase), and how he had been carried to another office where his life was assured for somebody not wholly unconnected with the sherry trade whom he remembered by the remarkable circumstance that he had a Straduarius

violin to dispose of, and also a Madonna, formed the sum and substance of Mr. Twemlow's narrative. Through which stalked the shadow of the awful Snigsworth, eyed afar off by money-lenders as Security in the Mist, and menacing Twemlow with his baronial truncheon.

To all, Mr. Fledgeby listened with the modest gravity becoming a confiding young man who knew it all beforehand, and, when it was finished, seriously shook his head. "I don't like, Mr. Twemlow," said Fledgeby, "I don't like Riah's calling in the principal. If he's determined to call it in, it must come."

"But supposing, sir," said Twemlow, downcast, "that it can't come?"

"Then," retorted Fledgeby, "you must go, you know."

"Where?" asked Twemlow, faintly.

"To prison," returned Fledgeby. Whereat Mr. Twemlow leaned his innocent head upon his hand, and moaned a little moan of distress and disgrace.

"However," said Fledgeby, appearing to pluck up his spirits, "we'll hope it's not so bad as that comes to. If you'll allow me, I'll mention to Mr. Riah when he comes in, who you are, and I'll tell him you're my friend, and I'll say my say for you, instead of your saying it for yourself; I may be able to do it in a more business-like way. You won't consider it a liberty?"

"I thank you again and again, sir," said Twemlow. "I am strong, strongly, disinclined to avail myself of your generosity, though my helplessness yields. For I cannot but feel that I—to put it in the mildest form of speech—that I have done nothing to deserve it."

"Where *can* he be?" muttered Fledgeby, referring to his watch again. "What *can* he have gone out for? Did you ever see him, Mr. Twemlow?"

"Never."

"He is a thorough Jew to look at, but he is a more thorough Jew to deal with. He's worst when he's quiet. If he's quiet, I shall take it as a very bad sign. Keep your eye upon him when he comes in, and, if he's quiet, don't be hopeful. Here he is!—He looks quiet."

With these words, which had the effect of causing the harmless Twemlow painful agitation, Mr. Fledgeby withdrew to his former post, and the old man entered the counting-house.

"Why, Mr. Riah," said Fledgeby, "I thought you were lost!"

The old man, glancing at the stranger, stood stock-still. He perceived that his master was leading up to the orders he was to take, and he waited to understand them.

"I really thought," repeated Fledgeby slowly, "that you were lost, Mr. Riah. Why, now I look at you—but no, you can't have done it; no, you can't have done it!"

Hat in hand, the old man lifted his head, and looked distressfully at Fledgeby as seeking to know what new moral burden he was to bear.

"You can't have rushed out to get the start of everybody else, and put in that bill of sale at Lammle's?" said Fledgeby. "Say you haven't, Mr. Riah."

"Sir, I have," replied the old man in a low voice.

"Oh my eye!" cried Fledgeby. "Tut, tut, tut! Dear, dear, dear! Well! I knew you were a hard customer, Mr. Riah, but I never thought you were as hard as that."

"Sir," said the old man, with great uneasiness, "I do as I am directed. I am not the principal here. I am but the agent of a superior, and I have no choice, no power."

"Don't say so," retorted Fledgeby, secretly exultant as the old man stretched out his hands, with a shrinking action of defending himself against the sharp construction of the two observers. "Don't play the tune of the trade, Mr. Riah. You've a right to get in your debts, if you're determined to do it, but don't pretend what every one in your line regularly pretends. At least, don't do it to me. Why should you, Mr. Riah? You know I know all about you."

The old man clasped the skirt of his long coat with his disengaged hand, and directed a wistful look at Fledgeby.

"And don't," said Fledgeby, "don't, I entreat you as a favour, Mr. Riah, be so devilish meek, for I know what'll follow if you are. Look here, Mr. Riah. This gentleman is Mr. Twemlow."

The Jew turned to him and bowed. That poor lamb bowed in return; polite, and terrified.

"I have made such a failure," proceeded Fledgeby, "in trying to do anything with you for my friend Lammle, that I've hardly a hope of doing anything with you for my friend (and connexion indeed) Mr. Twemlow. But I do think that if you would do a favor for anybody, you would for me, and I won't fail for want of trying, and I've passed my promise to Mr. Twemlow besides. Now, Mr. Riah, here is Mr. Twemlow. Always good for his interest, always coming up to time, always paying his little way. Now, why should you press Mr. Twemlow? You can't have any spite against Mr. Twemlow! Why not be easy with Mr. Twemlow?"

The old man looked into Fledgeby's little eyes for any sign of leave to be easy with Mr. Twemlow; but there was no sign in them.

"Mr. Twemlow is no connexion of yours, Mr. Riah," said Fledgeby; "you can't want to be even with him for having through life gone in for a gentleman and hung on to his Family. If Mr. Twemlow has a contempt for business, what can it matter to you?"

"But pardon me," interposed the gentle victim, "I have not. I should consider it presumption."

"There, Mr. Riah!" said Fledgeby, "isn't that handsomely said? Come! Make terms with me for Mr. Twemlow."

The old man looked again for any sign of permission to spare the poor little gentleman. No. Mr. Fledgeby meant him to be racked.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Twemlow," said Riah. "I have my instructions. I am invested with no authority for diverging from them. The money must be paid."

"In full and slap down, do you mean, Mr. Riah?" asked Fledgeby, to make things quite explicit.

"In full, sir, and at once," was Riah's answer.

Mr. Fledgeby shook his head deploringly at Twemlow, and mutely expressed in reference to the venerable figure standing before

him with eyes upon the ground: "What a Monster of an Israelite this is!"

"Mr. Riah," said Fledgeby.

The old man lifted up his eyes once more to the little eyes in Mr. Fledgeby's head, with some reviving hope that the sign might be coming yet.

"Mr. Riah, it's of no use my holding back the fact. There's a certain great party in the background in Mr. Twemlow's case, and you know it."

"I know it," the old man admitted.

"Now, I'll put it as a plain point of business, Mr. Riah. Are you fully determined (as a plain point of business) either to have that said great party's security, or that said great party's money?"

"Fully determined," answered Riah, as he read his master's face, and learnt the book.

"Not at all caring for, and indeed as it seems to me rather enjoying," said Fledgeby, with peculiar unction, "the precious kick-up and row that will come off between Mr. Twemlow and the said great party?"

This required no answer, and received none. Poor Mr. Twemlow, who had betrayed the keenest mental terrors since his noble kinsman loomed in the perspective, rose with a sigh to take his departure. "I thank you very much, sir," he said, offering Fledgeby his feverish hand. "You have done me an unmerited service. Thank you, thank you!"

"Don't mention it," answered Fledgeby. "It's a failure so far, but I'll stay behind, and take another touch at Mr. Riah."

"Do not deceive yourself, Mr. Twemlow," said the Jew, then addressing him directly for the first time. "There is no hope for you. You must expect no leniency here. You must pay in full, and you cannot pay too promptly, or you will be put to heavy charges. Trust nothing to me, sir. Money, money, money." When he had said these words in an emphatic manner, he acknowledged Mr. Twemlow's still polite motion of his head, and that amiable little worthy took his departure in the lowest spirits.

Fascination Fledgeby was in such a merry vein when the counting-house was cleared of him, that he had nothing for it but to go to the window, and lean his arms on the frame of the blind, and have his silent laugh out, with his back to his subordinate. When he turned round again with a composed countenance, his subordinate still stood in the same place, and the dolls' dressmaker sat behind the door with a look of horror.

"Halloa!" cried Mr. Fledgeby, "you're forgetting this young lady, Mr. Riah, and she has been waiting long enough too. Sell her her waste, please, and give her good measure if you can make up your mind to do the liberal thing for once."

He looked on for a time, as the Jew filled her little basket with such scraps as she was used to buy; but, his merry vein coming on again, he was obliged to turn round to the window once more, and lean his arms on the blind.

"There, my Cinderella dear," said the old man in a whisper, and

with a worn-out look, "the basket's full now. Bless you! And get you gone!"

"Don't call me your Cinderella dear," returned Miss Wren. "O you cruel godmother!"

She shook that emphatic little forefinger of hers in his face at parting, as earnestly and reproachfully as she had ever shaken it at her grim old child at home.

"You are not the godmother at all!" said she. "You are the Wolf in the Forest, the wicked Wolf! And if ever my dear Lizzie is sold and betrayed, I shall know who sold and betrayed her!"

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. WEGG PREPARES A GRINDSTONE FOR MR. BOFFIN'S NOSE.

HAVING assisted at a few more expositions of the lives of Misers, Mr. Venus became almost indispensable to the evenings at the Bower. The circumstance of having another listener to the wonders unfolded by Wegg, or, as it were, another calculator to cast up the guineas found in teapots, chimneys, racks and mangers, and other such banks of deposit, seemed greatly to heighten Mr. Boffin's enjoyment; while Silas Wegg, for his part, though of a jealous temperament which might under ordinary circumstances have resented the anatomist's getting into favour, was so very anxious to keep his eye on that gentleman—lest, being too much left to himself, he should be tempted to play any tricks with the precious document in his keeping—that he never lost an opportunity of commending him to Mr. Boffin's notice as a third party whose company was much to be desired. Another friendly demonstration towards him Mr. Wegg now regularly gratified. After each sitting was over, and the patron had departed, Mr. Wegg invariably saw Mr. Venus home. To be sure, he as invariably requested to be refreshed with a sight of the paper in which he was a joint proprietor; but he never failed to remark that it was the great pleasure he derived from Mr. Venus's improving society which had insensibly lured him round to Clerkenwell again, and that, finding himself once more attracted to the spot by the social powers of Mr. V., he would beg leave to go through that little incidental procedure, as a matter of form. "For well I know, sir," Mr. Wegg would add, "that a man of your delicate mind would wish to be checked off whenever the opportunity arises, and it is not for me to baulk your feelings."

A certain rustiness in Mr. Venus, which never became so lubricated by the oil of Mr. Wegg but that he turned under the screw in a creaking and stiff manner, was very noticeable at about this period. While assisting at the literary evenings, he even went so far, on two or three occasions, as to correct Mr. Wegg when he grossly mispronounced a word, or made nonsense of a passage; insomuch that Mr. Wegg took to surveying his course in the day, and to making arrangements for getting round rocks at night instead of running straight upon them. Of the slightest anatomical reference he became

particularly shy, and, if he saw a bone ahead, would go any distance out of his way rather than mention it by name.

The adverse destinies ordained that one evening Mr. Wegg's labouring bark became beset by polysyllables, and embarrassed among a perfect archipelago of hard words. It being necessary to take soundings every minute, and to feel the way with the greatest caution, Mr. Wegg's attention was fully employed. Advantage was taken of this dilemma by Mr. Venus, to pass a scrap of paper into Mr. Boffin's hand, and lay his finger on his own lip.

When Mr. Boffin got home at night he found that the paper contained Mr. Venus's card and these words: "Should be glad to be honored with a call respecting business of your own, about dusk on an early evening."

The very next evening saw Mr. Boffin peeping in at the preserved frogs in Mr. Venus's shop-window, and saw Mr. Venus espying Mr. Boffin with the readiness of one on the alert, and beckoning that gentleman into his interior. Responding, Mr. Boffin was invited to seat himself on the box of human miscellanies before the fire, and did so, looking round the place with admiring eyes. The fire being low and fitful, and the dusk gloomy, the whole stock seemed to be winking and blinking with both eyes, as Mr. Venus did. The French gentleman, though he had no eyes, was not at all behind-hand, but appeared, as the flame rose and fell, to open and shut his no eyes, with the regularity of the glass-eyed dogs and ducks and birds. The big-headed babies were equally obliging in lending their grotesque aid to the general effect.

"You see, Mr. Venus, I've lost no time," said Mr. Boffin. "Here I am."

"Here you are, sir," assented Mr. Venus.

"I don't like secrecy," pursued Mr. Boffin— "at least, not in a general way I don't—but I dare say you'll show me good reason for being secret so far."

"I think I shall, sir," returned Venus.

"Good," said Mr. Boffin. "You don't expect Wegg, I take it for granted?"

"No, sir. I expect no one but the present company."

Mr. Boffin glanced about him, as accepting under that inclusive denomination the French gentleman and the circle in which he didn't move, and repeated, "The present company."

"Sir," said Mr. Venus, "before entering upon business, I shall have to ask you for your word and honor that we are in confidence."

"Let's wait a bit and understand what the expression means," answered Mr. Boffin. "In confidence for how long? In confidence for ever and a day?"

"I take your hint, sir," said Venus; "you think you might consider the business, when you came to know it, to be of a nature incompatible with confidence on your part?"

"I might," said Mr. Boffin with a cautious look.

"True, sir. Well, sir," observed Venus, after clutching at his dusty hair, to brighten his ideas, "let us put it another way. I open the

business with you, relying upon your honor not to do anything in it, and not to mention me in it, without my knowledge."

"That sounds fair," said Mr. Boffin. "I agree to that."

"I have your word and honor, sir?"

"My good fellow," retorted Mr. Boffin, "you have my word; and how you can have that, without my honor too, I don't know. I've sorted a lot of dust in my time, but I never knew the two things go into separate heaps."

This remark seemed rather to abash Mr. Venus. He hesitated, and said, "Very true, sir;" and again, "Very true, sir," before resuming the thread of his discourse.

"Mr. Boffin, if I confess to you that I fell into a proposal of which you were the subject, and of which you oughtn't to have been the subject, you will allow me to mention, and will please take into favourable consideration, that I was in a crushed state of mind at the time."

The Golden Dustman, with his hands folded on the top of his stout stick, with his chin resting upon them, and with something leering and whimsical in his eyes, gave a nod, and said, "Quite so, Venus."

"That proposal, sir, was a conspiring breach of your confidence, to such an extent, that I ought at once to have made it known to you. But I didn't, Mr. Boffin, and I fell into it."

Without moving eye or finger, Mr. Boffin gave another nod, and placidly repeated, "Quite so, Venus."

"Not that I was ever hearty in it, sir," the penitent anatomist went on, "or that I ever viewed myself with anything but reproach for having turned out of the paths of science into the paths of ——" he was going to say "villany," but, unwilling to press too hard upon himself, substituted with great emphasis—"Weggery."

Placid and whimsical of look as ever, Mr. Boffin answered: "Quite so, Venus."

"And now, sir," said Venus, "having prepared your mind in the rough, I will articulate the details." With which brief professional exordium, he entered on the history of the friendly move, and truly recounted it. One might have thought that it would have extracted some show of surprise or anger, or other emotion, from Mr. Boffin, but it extracted nothing beyond his former comment: "Quite so, Venus."

"I have astonished you, sir, I believe?" said Mr. Venus, pausing dubiously.

Mr. Boffin simply answered as aforesaid: "Quite so, Venus."

By this time the astonishment was all on the other side. It did not, however, so continue. For, when Venus passed to Wegg's discovery, and from that to their having both seen Mr. Boffin dig up the Dutch bottle, that gentleman changed colour, changed his attitude, became extremely restless, and ended (when Venus ended) by being in a state of manifest anxiety, trepidation, and confusion.

"Now, sir," said Venus, finishing off; "you best know what was in that Dutch bottle, and why you dug it up, and took it away. I don't pretend to know anything more about it than I saw. All I know is this: I am proud of my calling after all (though it has been attended by one dreadful drawback which has told upon my heart,

and almost equally upon my skeleton), and I mean to live by my calling. Putting the same meaning into other words, I do not mean to turn a single dishonest penny by this affair. As the best amends I can make you for having ever gone into it, I make known to you, as a warning, what Wegg has found out. My opinion is, that Wegg is not to be silenced at a modest price, and I build that opinion on his beginning to dispose of your property the moment he knew his power. Whether it's worth your while to silence him at any price, you will decide for yourself, and take your measures accordingly. As far as I am concerned, I have no price. If I am ever called upon for the truth, I tell it, but I want to do no more than I have now done and ended."

"Thank'ee, Venus!" said Mr. Boffin, with a hearty grip of his hand; "thank'ee, Venus, thank'ee, Venus!" And then walked up and down the little shop in great agitation. "But look here, Venus," he by-and-by resumed, nervously sitting down again; "if I have to buy Wegg up, I shan't buy him any cheaper for your being out of it. Instead of his having half the money—it was to have been half, I suppose? Share and share alike?"

"It was to have been half, sir," answered Venus.

"Instead of that, he'll now have all. I shall pay the same, if not more. For you tell me he's an unconscionable dog, a ravenous rascal."

"He is," said Venus.

"Don't you think, Venus," insinuated Mr. Boffin, after looking at the fire for a while—"don't you feel as if—you might like to pretend to be in it till Wegg was bought up, and then ease your mind by handing over to me what you had made believe to pocket?"

"No I don't, sir," returned Venus, very positively.

"Not to make amends?" insinuated Mr. Boffin.

"No, sir. It seems to me, after maturely thinking it over, that the best amends for having got out of the square is to get back into the square."

"Humph!" mused Mr. Boffin. "When you say the square, you mean——"

"I mean," said Venus, stoutly and shortly, "the right."

"It appears to me," said Mr. Boffin, grumbling over the fire in an injured manner, "that the right is with me, if it's anywhere. I have much more right to the old man's money than the Crown can ever have. What was the Crown to him except the King's Taxes? Whereas, me and my wife, we was all in all to him."

Mr. Venus, with his head upon his hands, rendered melancholy by the contemplation of Mr. Boffin's avarice, only murmured to steep himself in the luxury of that frame of mind: "She did not wish so to regard herself, nor yet to be so regarded."

"And how am I to live," asked Mr. Boffin, piteously, "if I'm to be going buying fellows up out of the little that I've got? And how am I to set about it? When am I to get my money ready? When am I to make a bid? You haven't told me when he threatens to drop down upon me."

Venus explained under what conditions, and with what views, the

dropping down upon Mr. Boffin was held over until the Mounds should be cleared away. Mr. Boffin listened attentively. "I suppose," said he, with a gleam of hope, "there's no doubt about the genuineness and date of this confounded will?"

"None whatever," said Mr. Venus.

"Where might it be deposited at present?" asked Mr. Boffin, in a wheedling tone.

"It's in my possession, sir."

"Is it?" he cried, with great eagerness. "Now, for any liberal sum of money that could be agreed upon, Venus, would you put it in the fire?"

"No, sir, I wouldn't," interrupted Mr. Venus.

"Nor pass it over to me?"

"That would be the same thing. No, sir," said Mr. Venus.

The Golden Dustman seemed about to pursue these questions, when a stumping noise was heard outside, coming towards the door. "Hush! here's Wegg!" said Venus. "Get behind the young alligator in the corner, Mr. Boffin, and judge him for yourself. I won't light a candle till he's gone; there'll only be the glow of the fire; Wegg's well acquainted with the alligator, and he won't take particular notice of him. Draw your legs in, Mr. Boffin, at present I see a pair of shoes at the end of his tail. Get your head well behind his smile, Mr. Boffin, and you'll lie comfortable there; you'll find plenty of room behind his smile. He's a little dusty, but he's very like you in tone. Are you right, sir?"

Mr. Boffin had but whispered an affirmative response, when Wegg came stumping in. "Partner," said that gentleman in a sprightly manner, "how's yourself?"

"Tolerable," returned Mr. Venus. "Not much to boast of."

"In-deed!" said Wegg: "sorry, partner, that you're not picking up faster, but your soul's too large for your body, sir; that's where it is. And how's our stock in trade, partner? Safe bind, safe find, partner? Is that about it?"

"Do you wish to see it?" asked Venus.

"If you please, partner," said Wegg, rubbing his hands. "I wish to see it jintly with yourself. Or, in similar words to some that was set to music some time back:

'I wish you to see it with your eyes,
'And I will pledge with mine.'

Turning his back and turning a key, Mr. Venus produced the document, holding on by his usual corner. Mr. Wegg, holding on by the opposite corner, sat down on the seat so lately vacated by Mr. Boffin, and looked it over. "All right, sir," he slowly and unwillingly admitted, in his reluctance to loose his hold, "all right!" And greedily watched his partner as he turned his back again, and turned his key again.

"There's nothing new, I suppose?" said Venus, resuming his low chair behind the counter.

"Yes there is, sir," replied Wegg; "there was something new this morning. That foxey old grasper and griper——"

"Mr. Boffin?" inquired Venus, with a glance towards the alligator's yard or two of smile.

"Mister be blowed!" cried Wegg, yielding to his honest indignation. "Boffin. Dusty Boffin. That foxey old grunter and grinder, sir, turns into the yard this morning, to meddle with our property, a menial tool of his own, a young man by the name of Sloppy. Ecod, when I say to him, 'What do you want here, young man?' This is a private yard,' he pulls out a paper from Boffin's other blackguard, the one I was passed over for. 'This is to authorize Sloppy to overlook the carting and to watch the work.' That's pretty strong, I think, Mr. Venus?"

"Remember he doesn't know yet of our claim on the property," suggested Venus.

"Then he must have a hint of it," said Wegg, "and a strong one that'll jog his terrors a bit. Give him an inch, and he'll take an ell. Let him alone this time, and what'll he do with our property next? I tell you what, Mr. Venus; it comes to this; I must be overbearing with Boffin, or I shall fly into several pieces. I can't contain myself when I look at him. Every time I see him putting his hand in his pocket, I see him putting it into my pocket. Every time I hear him jingling his money, I hear him taking liberties with my money. Flesh and blood can't bear it. No," said Mr. Wegg, greatly exasperated, "and I'll go further. A wooden leg can't bear it!"

"But, Mr. Wegg," urged Venus, "it was your own idea that he should not be exploded upon, till the Mounds were carted away."

"But it was likewise my idea, Mr. Venus," retorted Wegg, "that if he came sneaking and sniffing about the property, he should be threatened, given to understand that he has no right to it, and be made our slave. Wasn't that my idea, Mr. Venus?"

"It certainly was, Mr. Wegg."

"It certainly was, as you say, partner," assented Wegg, put into a better humour by the ready admission. "Very well. I consider his planting one of his menial tools in the yard, an act of sneaking and sniffing. And his nose shall be put to the grindstone for it."

"It was not your fault, Mr. Wegg, I must admit," said Venus, "that he got off with the Dutch bottle that night."

"As you handsomely say again, partner! No, it was not my fault. I'd have had that bottle out of him. Was it to be borne that he should come, like a thief in the dark, digging among stuff that was far more ours than his (seeing that we could deprive him of every grain of it, if he didn't buy us at our own figure), and carrying off treasure from its bowels? No, it was not to be borne. And for that, too, his nose shall be put to the grindstone."

"How do you propose to do it, Mr. Wegg?"

"To put his nose to the grindstone? I propose," returned that estimable man, "to insult him openly. And, if looking into this eye of mine, he dares to offer a word in answer, to retort upon him before he can take his breath, 'Add another word to that, you dusty old dog, and you're a beggar.'"

"Suppose he says nothing, Mr. Wegg?"

"Then," replied Wegg, "we shall have come to an understanding with very little trouble, and I'll break him and drive him, Mr. Venus. I'll put him in harness, and I'll bear him up tight, and I'll break him and drive him. The harder the old Dust is driven, sir, the higher he'll pay. And I mean to be paid high, Mr. Venus, I promise you."

"You speak quite revengefully, Mr. Wegg."

"Revengefully, sir? Is it for him that I have declined and falled, night after night? Is it for his pleasure that I've waited at home of an evening, like a set of skittles, to be set up and knocked over, set up and knocked over, by whatever balls—or books—he chose to bring against me? Why, I'm a hundred times the man he is, sir; five hundred times!"

Perhaps it was with the malicious intent of urging him on to his worst that Mr. Venus looked as if he doubted that.

"What? Was it outside the house at present ockypied, to its disgrace, by that minion of fortune and worm of the hour," said Wegg, falling back upon his strongest terms of reprobation, and slapping the counter, "that I, Silas Wegg, five hundred times the man he ever was, sat in all weathers, waiting for a errand or a customer? Was it outside that very house as I first set eyes upon him, rolling in the lap of luxury, when I was a selling halfpenny ballads there for a living? And am I to grovel in the dust for *him* to walk over? No!"

There was a grin upon the ghastly countenance of the French gentleman under the influence of the firelight, as if he were computing how many thousand slanderers and traitors array themselves against the fortunate, on premises exactly answering to those of Mr. Wegg. One might have fancied that the big-headed babies were toppling over with their hydrocephalic attempts to reckon up the children of men who transform their benefactors into their injurers by the same process. The yard or two of smile on the part of the alligator might have been invested with the meaning, "All about this was quite familiar knowledge down in the depths of the slime, ages ago."

"But," said Wegg, possibly with some slight perception to the foregoing effect, "your speaking countenance remarks, Mr. Venus, that I'm duller and savager than usual. Perhaps I *have* allowed myself to brood too much. Begone, dull Care! 'Tis gone, sir. I've looked in upon you, and empire resumes her sway. For, as the song says—subject to your correction, sir—

- 'When the heart of a man is depressed with cares,
- 'The mist is dispelled if Venus appears.
- 'Like the notes of a fiddle, you sweetly, sir, sweetly,
- 'Raises our spirits and charms our ears.'

Good-night, sir."

"I shall have a word or two to say to you, Mr. Wegg, before long," remarked Venus, "respecting my share in the project we've been speaking of."

"My time, sir," returned Wegg, "is yours. In the meanwhile let it be fully understood that I shall not neglect bringing the grindstone

to bear, nor yet bringing Dusty Boffin's nose to it. His nose once brought to it, shall be held to it by these hands, Mr. Venus, till the sparks flies out in showers."

With this agreeable promise Wegg stumped out, and shut the shop-door after him. "Wait till I light a candle, Mr. Boffin," said Venus, "and you'll come out more comfortable." So, he lighting a candle and holding it up at arm's length, Mr. Boffin disengaged himself from behind the alligator's smile, with an expression of countenance so very downcast that it not only appeared as if the alligator had the whole of the joke to himself, but further as if it had been conceived and executed at Mr. Boffin's expense.

"That's a treacherous fellow," said Mr. Boffin, dusting his arms and legs as he came forth, the alligator having been but musty company. "That's a dreadful fellow."

"The alligator, sir?" said Venus.

"No, Venus, no. The Serpent."

"You'll have the goodness to notice, Mr. Boffin," remarked Venus, "that I said nothing to him about my going out of the affair altogether, because I didn't wish to take you anyways by surprise. But I can't be too soon out of it for my satisfaction, Mr. Boffin, and I now put it to you when it will suit your views for me to retire?"

"Thank'ee, Venus, thank'ee, Venus; but I don't know what to say," returned Mr. Boffin, "I don't know what to do. He'll drop down on me any way. He seems fully determined to drop down; don't he?"

Mr. Venus opined that such was clearly his intention.

"You might be a sort of protection for me, if you remained in it," said Mr. Boffin; "you might stand betwixt him and me, and take the edge off him. Don't you feel as if you could make a show of remaining in it, Venus, till I had time to turn myself round?"

Venus naturally inquired how long Mr. Boffin thought it might take him to turn himself round?

"I am sure I don't know," was the answer, given quite at a loss. "Everything is so at sixes and sevens. If I had never come into the property, I shouldn't have minded. But being in it, it would be very trying to be turned out; now, don't you acknowledge that it would, Venus?"

Mr. Venus preferred, he said, to leave Mr. Boffin to arrive at his own conclusions on that delicate question.

"I am sure I don't know what to do," said Mr. Boffin. "If I ask advice of any one else, it's only letting in another person to be bought out, and then I shall be ruined that way, and might as well have given up the property and gone slap to the workhouse. If I was to take advice of my young man, Rokesmith, I should have to buy *him* out. Sooner or later, of course, he'd drop down upon me, like Wegg. I was brought into the world to be dropped down upon, it appears to me."

Mr. Venus listened to these lamentations in silence, while Mr. Boffin jogged to and fro, holding his pockets as if he had a pain in them.

"After all, you haven't said what you mean to do yourself, Venus. When you do go out of it, how do you mean to go?"

Venus replied that as Wegg had found the document and handed

it to him, it was his intention to hand it back to Wegg, with the declaration that he himself would have nothing to say to it, or do with it, and that Wegg must act as he chose, and take the consequences.

"And then he drops down with his whole weight upon me!" cried Mr. Boffin, ruefully. "I'd sooner be dropped upon by you than by him, or even by you jintly, than by him alone!"

Mr. Venus could only repeat that it was his fixed intention to betake himself to the paths of science, and to walk in the same all the days of his life; not dropping down upon his fellow-creatures until they were deceased, and then only to articulate them to the best of his humble ability.

"How long could you be persuaded to keep up the appearance of remaining in it?" asked Mr. Boffin, retiring on his other idea. "Could you be got to do so, till the Mounds are gone?"

No. That would protract the mental uneasiness of Mr. Venus too long, he said.

"Not if I was to show you reason now?" demanded Mr. Boffin; "not if I was to show you good and sufficient reason?"

If by good and sufficient reason Mr. Boffin meant honest and unimpeachable reason, that might weigh with Mr. Venus against his personal wishes and convenience. But he must add that he saw no opening to the possibility of such reason being shown him.

"Come and see me, Venus," said Mr. Boffin, "at my house."

"Is the reason there, sir?" asked Mr. Venus, with an incredulous smile and blink.

"It may be, or may not be," said Mr. Boffin, "just as you view it. But in the meantime don't go out of the matter. Look here. Do this. Give me your word that you won't take any steps with Wegg, without my knowledge, just as I have given you my word that I won't without yours."

"Done, Mr. Boffin!" said Venus, after brief consideration.

"Thank'ee, Venus, thank'ee, Venus! Done!"

"When shall I come to see you, Mr. Boffin."

"When you like. The sooner the better. I must be going now. Good-night, Venus."

"Good-night, sir."

"And good-night to the rest of the present company," said Mr. Boffin, glancing round the shop. "They make a queer show, Venus, and I should like to be better acquainted with them some day. Good-night, Venus, good-night! Thankee, Venus, thankee, Venus!" With that he jogged out into the street, and jogged upon his homeward way.

"Now, I wonder," he meditated as he went along, nursing his stick, "whether it can be, that Venus is setting himself to get the better of Wegg? Whether it can be, that he means, when I have bought Wegg out, to have me all to himself and to pick me clean to the bones!"

It was a cunning and suspicious idea, quite in the way of his school of Misers, and he looked very cunning and suspicious as he went jogging through the streets. More than once or twice, more than

twice or thrice, say half a dozen times, he took his stick from the arm on which he nursed it, and hit a straight sharp rap at the air with its head. Possibly the wooden countenance of Mr. Silas Wegg was incorporeally before him at those moments, for he hit with intense satisfaction.

He was within a few streets of his own house, when a little private carriage, coming in the contrary direction, passed him, turned round, and passed him again. It was a little carriage of eccentric movement, for again he heard it stop behind him and turn round, and again he saw it pass him. Then it stopped, and then went on, out of sight. But, not far out of sight, for, when he came to the corner of his own street, there it stood again.

There was a lady's face at the window as he came up with this carriage, and he was passing it when the lady softly called to him by his name.

"I beg your pardon, Ma'am?" said Mr. Boffin, coming to a stop.

"It is Mrs. Lammle," said the lady.

Mr. Boffin went up to the window, and hoped Mrs. Lammle was well.

"Not very well, dear Mr. Boffin; I have fluttered myself by being—perhaps foolishly—uneasy and anxious. I have been waiting for you some time. Can I speak to you?"

Mr. Boffin proposed that Mrs. Lammle should drive on to his house, a few hundred yards further.

"I would rather not, Mr. Boffin, unless you particularly wish it. I feel the difficulty and delicacy of the matter so much that I would rather avoid speaking to you at your own home. You must think this very strange?"

Mr. Boffin said no, but meant yes.

"It is because I am so grateful for the good opinion of all my friends, and am so touched by it, that I cannot bear to run the risk of forfeiting it in any case, even in the cause of duty. I have asked my husband (my dear Alfred, Mr. Boffin) whether it is the cause of duty, and he has most emphatically said Yes. I wish I had asked him sooner. It would have spared me much distress."

("Can this be more dropping down upon me!" thought Mr. Boffin, quite bewildered.)

"It was Alfred who sent me to you, Mr. Boffin. Alfred said, 'Don't come back, Sophronia, until you have seen Mr. Boffin, and told him all. Whatever he may think of it, he ought certainly to know it.' Would you mind coming into the carriage?"

Mr. Boffin answered, "Not at all," and took his seat at Mrs. Lammle's side.

"Drive slowly anywhere," Mrs. Lammle called to her coachman, "and don't let the carriage rattle."

"It *must* be more dropping down, I think," said Mr. Boffin to himself. "What next?"

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INDIGESTION is a weakness or want of power in the digestive juices in the stomach to convert what we eat and drink into healthy matter, for the proper nourishment of the whole system. It is caused by everything which weakens the system in general, or the stomach in particular. From it proceed nearly all the diseases to which we are liable; for it is very certain, that if we could always keep the stomach right we should rarely die by old age or accident. Indigestion produces a great variety of unpleasant sensations: amongst the most prominent of its miserable effects are a want of, or an indignant appetite, sometimes attended with a constant craving for drink, a distension or swelling of enlargement of the stomach, flatulency, heartburn, pains in the stomach, acidity, unpleasant taste in the mouth, perhaps sickness, rumbling noise in the bowels: in some cases of depraved digestion there is nearly a complete disrelish for food, but still the appetite is not greatly impaired, as at the protracted period of meals persons so afflicted can eat heartily, although without much gratification; a long train of nervous symptoms are also frequent attendants, general debility, great languidness, and incapacity for exertion. The minds of persons so afflicted frequently become irritable and desponding, and great anxiety is observable in the countenance; they appear thoughtful, melancholy, and dejected, under great apprehension of some imaginary danger, will start at any unexpected noise or occurrence, and become so agitated that they require some

time to calm and collect themselves: yet for all this the mind is exhilarated without much difficulty; pleasing events, society, will for a time dissipate all appearance of disease; but the excitement produced by an agreeable change vanishes soon after the cause has gone by. Other symptoms are, violent palpitations, restlessness, the sleep disturbed by frightful dreams and startings, and affording little or no refreshment; occasionally there is much moaning, with a sense of weight and oppression upon the chest, nightmare, &c.

It is almost impossible to enumerate all the symptoms of this first invader upon the constitution, as in a hundred cases of *Indigestion* there will probably be something peculiar to each; but, be they what they may, they are all occasioned by the food becoming a burden rather than a support to the stomach; and in all its stages the medicine most wanted is that which will afford speedy and effectual assistance to the digestive organs, and give energy to the nervous and muscular systems,—nothing can more speedily or with more certainty effect so desirable an object than *Norton's Extract of Camomile Flowers*. The herb has from time immemorial been highly esteemed in England as a grateful anodyne, imparting an aromatic bitter to the taste, and a pleasing degree of warmth and strength to the stomach; and in all cases of indigestion, gout in the stomach, windy colic, and general weakness, it has for ages been strongly recommended by the most eminent practitioners as very useful and beneficial. The

great, indeed only, objection to its use has been the large quantity of water which it takes to dissolve a small part of the flowers, and which must be taken with it into the stomach. It requires a quarter of a pint of boiling water to dissolve the soluble portion of one drachm of Camomile Flowers; and, when one or even two ounces may be taken with advantage, it must at once be seen how impossible it is to take a proper dose of this wholesome herb in the form of tea; and the only reason why it has not long since been placed the very first in rank of all restorative medicines is, that in taking it the stomach has always been loaded with water, which tends in a great measure to counteract, and very frequently wholly to destroy the effect. It must be evident that loading a weak stomach with a large quantity of water, merely for the purpose of conveying into it a small quantity of medicine, must be injurious; and that the medicine must possess powerful renovating properties only to counteract the bad effects likely to be produced by the water. Generally speaking, this has been the case with Camomile Flowers, a herb possessing the highest restorative qualities, and when properly taken, decidedly the most speedy restorer, and the most certain preserver of health.

NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS are prepared by a peculiar process, accidentally discovered, and known only to the proprietor, and which he firmly believes to be one of the most valuable modern discoveries in medicine, by which all the essential and extractive matter of more than an ounce of the flowers is concentrated in four moderate-sized pills. Experience has afforded the most ample proof that they possess all the fine aromatic and stomachic properties for which the herb has been esteemed; and, as they are taken into the stomach unencumbered by any diluting or indigestible substance, in the same degree has their benefit been more immediate and decided. Mild in their operation and pleasant in their effect, they may be taken at any age, and under any circumstance, without danger or inconvenience. A person exposed to cold and wet a whole day or night could not possibly receive any injury from taking them, but, on the contrary, they would effectually prevent a cold being taken. After a long acquaintance with and strict observance of the medicinal properties of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, it is only doing

them justice to say, that they are really most valuable of all TONIC MEDICINES. The word tonic is meant a medicine which gives strength to the stomach sufficient to digest in proper quantities all wholesome food, which increases the power of the nerve and muscle of the human body, in other words, invigorates the nervous muscular systems. The solidity or firmness of the whole tissue of the body which quickly follows the use of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, their certain and speedy effects in repairing the partial dilapidations from time, intemperance, and their lasting salutary influence on the whole frame, is most convincing, that in the smallest compass is contained the largest quantity of the tonic principle, of so peculiar a nature as to pervade the whole system, through which it diffuses health and strength sufficient to resist the formation of disease, and also to fortify the constitution against contagion; as such, its general use is strongly recommended as preventative during the prevalence of malignant fever or other infectious diseases; to persons attending sick rooms they are valuable, as in no one instance have they failed in preventing the taking of illness, even under the most trying circumstances.

As *Norton's Camomile Pills* are particularly recommended for all stomach complaints or indigestion, it will probably be expected that some advice should be given respecting diet, though after all that has been written upon the subject, after the publication of volume upon volume, after the country has, as it were, been inundated with political essays on diet, as a means of prolonging life, it would be unnecessary to say much did we not feel it our duty to make this humble endeavour of inducing the public to regard them not, but to adopt that course which is dictated by nature, by reason, and by common sense. Those persons who study the wholesomes, and are governed by the opinions of writers on diet, are uniformly both unhealthy in body and weak in mind. There can be no doubt that the palate is designed to inform us what is proper for the stomach, and of course that must best instruct us what food to take and what to avoid; we want no other adviser. Nothing can be more clear than that those articles which are agreeable to the taste were by nature intended for our food and sustenance, whether liquid or solid, foreign or of native

roduction : if they are pure and unadulterated, no harm need be dreaded by their use ; they will only injure by abuse. Consequently, whatever the palate approves, eat and drink always in moderation, but never in excess ; keeping in mind that the first process of digestion is performed in the mouth, the second in the stomach ; and that, in order that the stomach may be able to do its work properly, it is requisite the first process should be well performed ; this consists, in masticating or chewing the solid food, so as to break down and separate the fibres and small substances of meat and vegetable, mixing them well, and blending the whole together before they are swallowed ; and it is particularly urged upon all to take plenty of time to their meals and never eat in haste. If you conform to this short and simple, but comprehensive advice, and find that there are various things which others eat and drink with pleasure and without inconvenience, and which would be pleasant to yourself only that they disagree, you may once conclude that the fault is in the stomach, that it does not possess the power which it ought to do, that it wants assistance, and the sooner that assistance is afforded the better. A very short trial of this medicine will best prove how soon it will put the stomach in a condition to perform with ease all the work which nature intended for it. By its use you will soon be able to enjoy, in moderation, whatever is agreeable to the taste, and unable to name one individual article of food which disagrees with its situation on the stomach. Never forget that a small meal well digested affords more nourishment to the system than a large one, even of the same food, when digested imperfectly. Let the dish be ever so delicious, ever so enticing a variety offered, the bottle ever so enchanting, never forget that temperance tends to preserve health, and that health is the soul of enjoyment. But should an impropriety be at any time, or ever often committed, by which the stomach becomes overloaded or disordered, render it immediate aid by taking a dose of *Norton's*

Camomile Pills, which will so promptly assist in carrying off the burden thus imposed upon it that all will soon be right again.

It is most certainly true that every person in his lifetime consumes a quantity of noxious matter, which if taken at one meal would be fatal : it is these small quantities of noxious matter, which are introduced into our food, either by accident or wilful adulteration, which we find so often upset the stomach, and not unfrequently lay the foundation of illness, and perhaps final ruination to health. To preserve the constitution, it should be our constant care, if possible, to counteract the effect of these small quantities of unwholesome matter ; and whenever, in that way, an enemy to the constitution finds its way into the stomach, a friend should be immediately sent after it, which would prevent its mischievous effects, and expel it altogether ; no better friend can be found, nor one which will perform the task with greater certainty than **NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS**. And let it be observed that the longer this medicine is taken the less it will be wanted ; it can in no case become habitual, as its entire action is to give energy and force to the stomach, which is the spring of life, the source from which the whole frame draws its succour and support. After an excess of eating or drinking, and upon every occasion of the general health being at all disturbed, these **PILLS** should be immediately taken, as they will stop and eradicate disease at its commencement. Indeed, it is most confidently asserted, that by the timely use of this medicine only, and a common degree of caution, any person may enjoy all the comforts within his reach, may pass through life without an illness, and with the certainty of attaining a healthy **OLD AGE**.

On account of their volatile properties, they must be kept in bottles ; and if closely corked their qualities are neither impaired by time nor injured by any change of climate whatever. Price, 13½d. and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions. The large bottle contains the quantity of three small ones, or **PILLS** equal to fourteen ounces of **CAMOMILE FLOWERS**.

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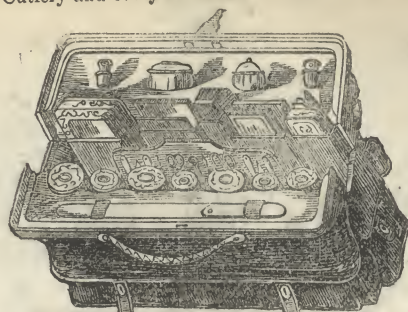
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